PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT
CONTENT

Blue [illegible] g

Story and Art by **Shoko Hidaka**

volume 3

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CONTENT

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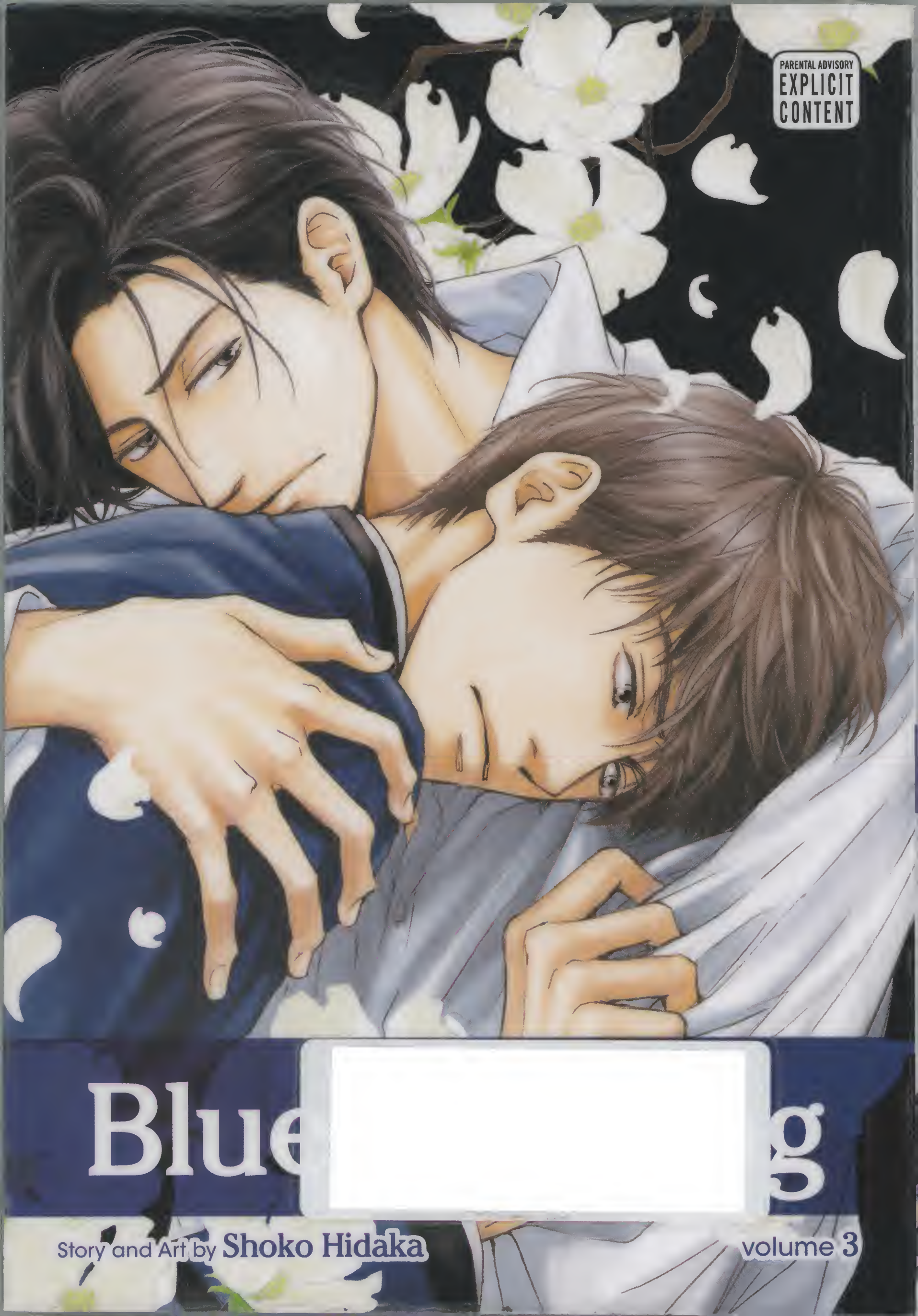

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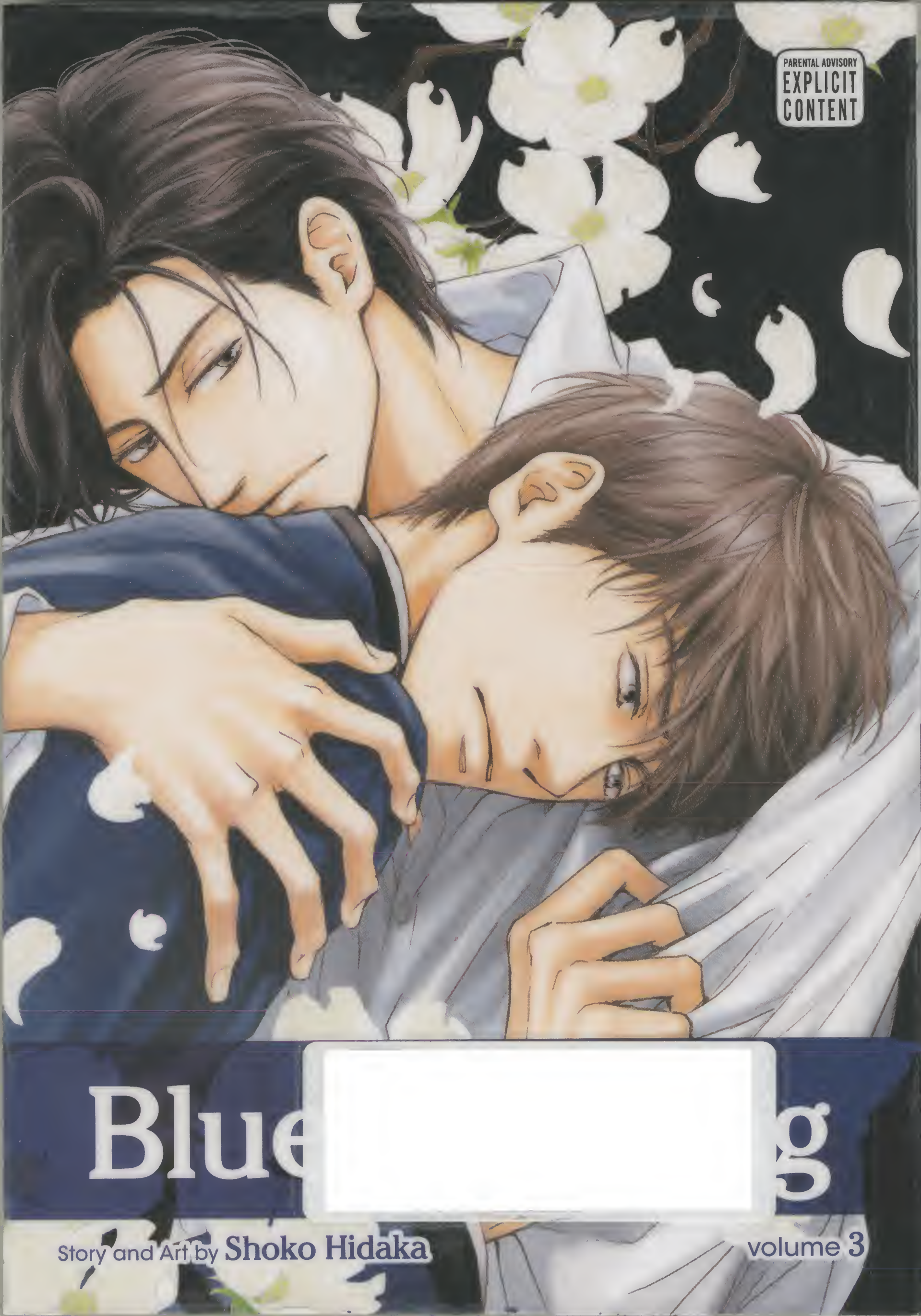

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Story and Art by **Shoko Hidaka**

volume 3

Blue Morning

Clinging to his fierce, unwavering love for Katsuragi, Akihito moves ever closer to an engagement to the daughter of Duke Sajo. Firmly focused on his future, Akihito asks his friend Ishizaki's father to be his go-between in the marriage talks, but the father insists that in exchange he wants Tomoyuki Katsuragi! Around the same time, former houseboy Amamiya discovers mysterious documents relating to Katsuragi's lineage.

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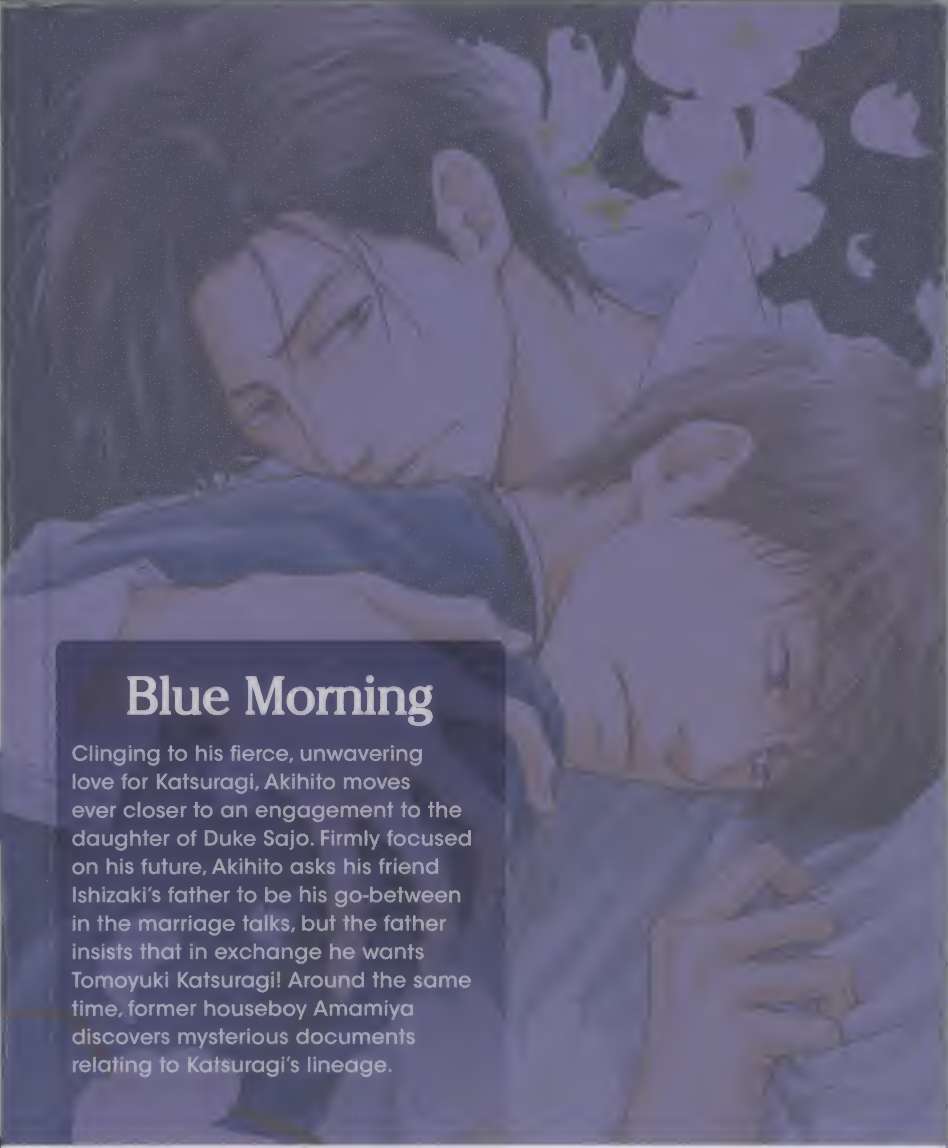

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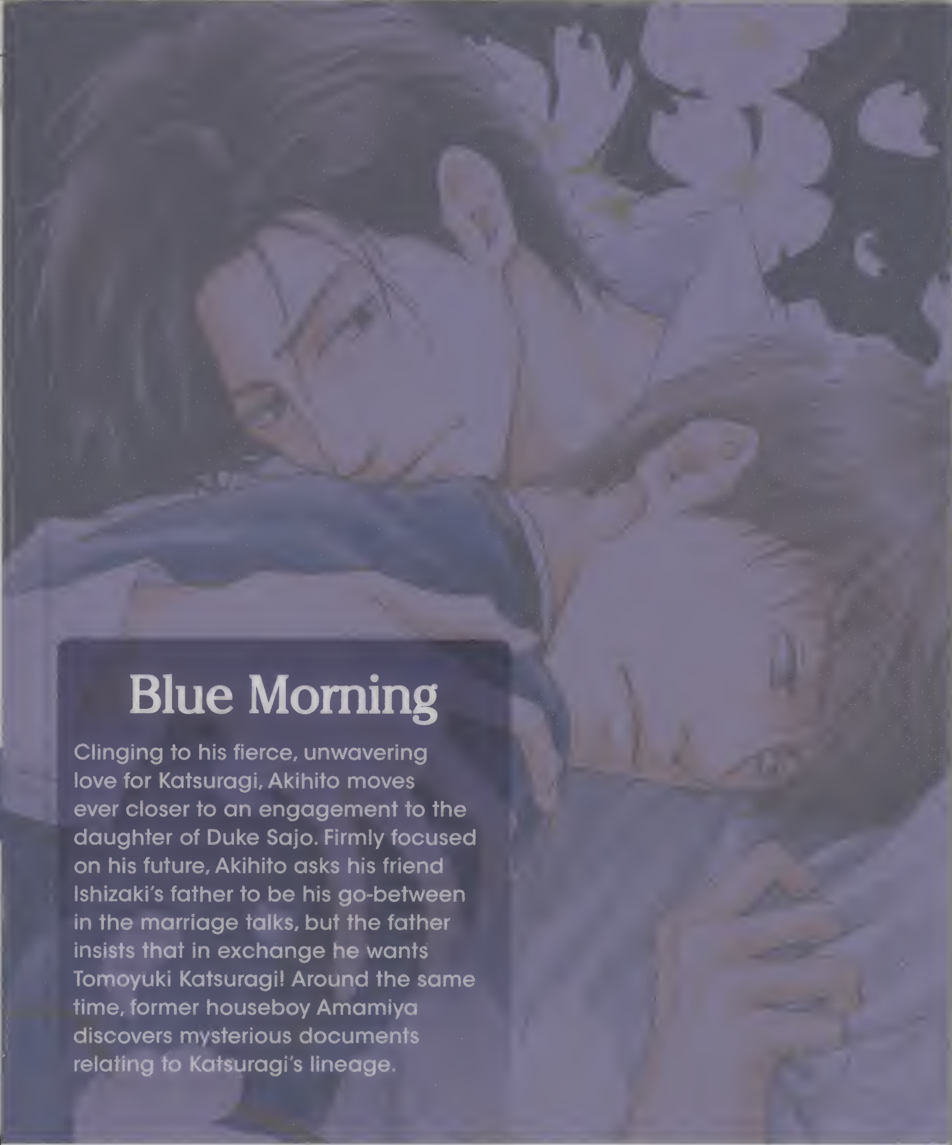

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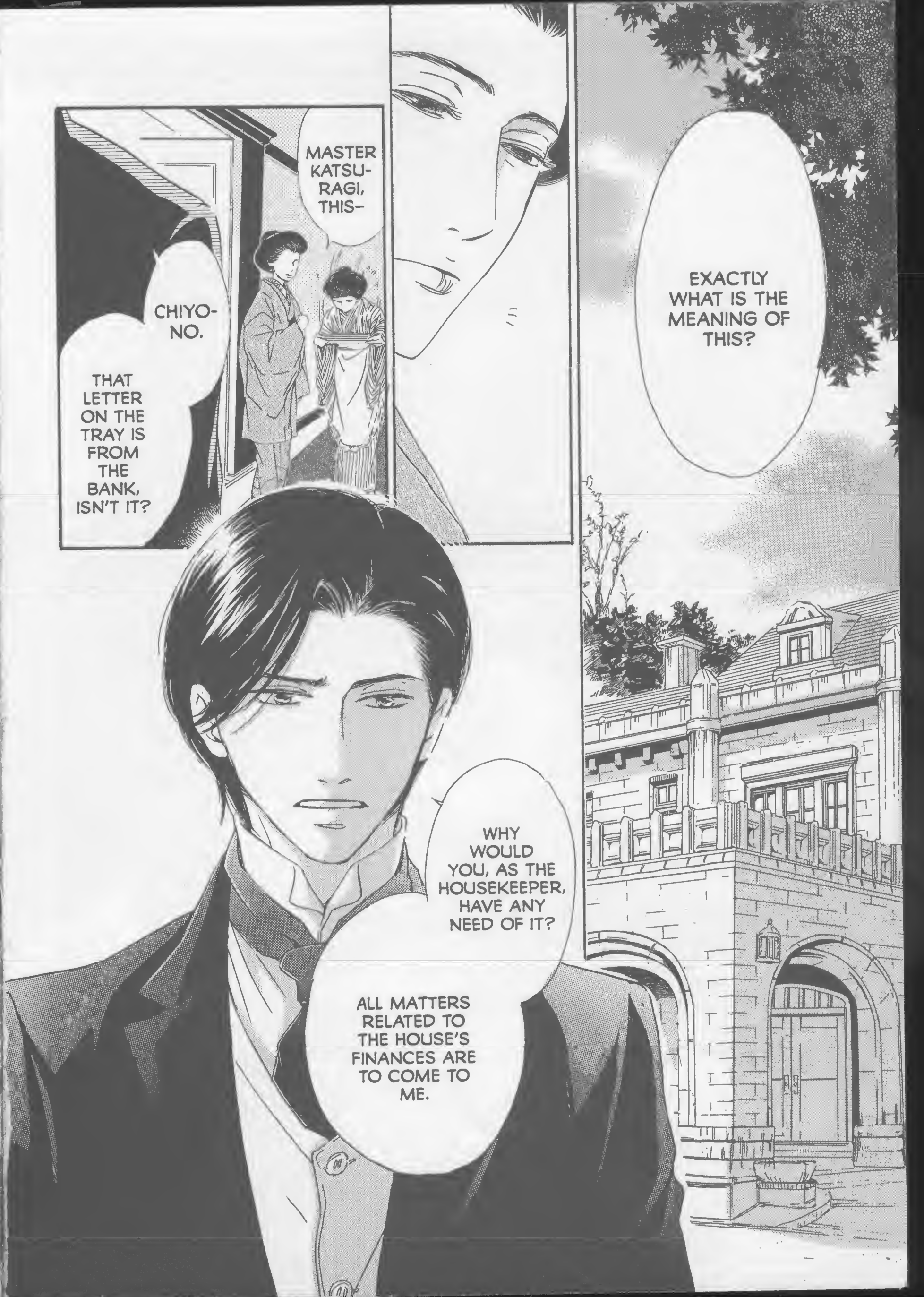
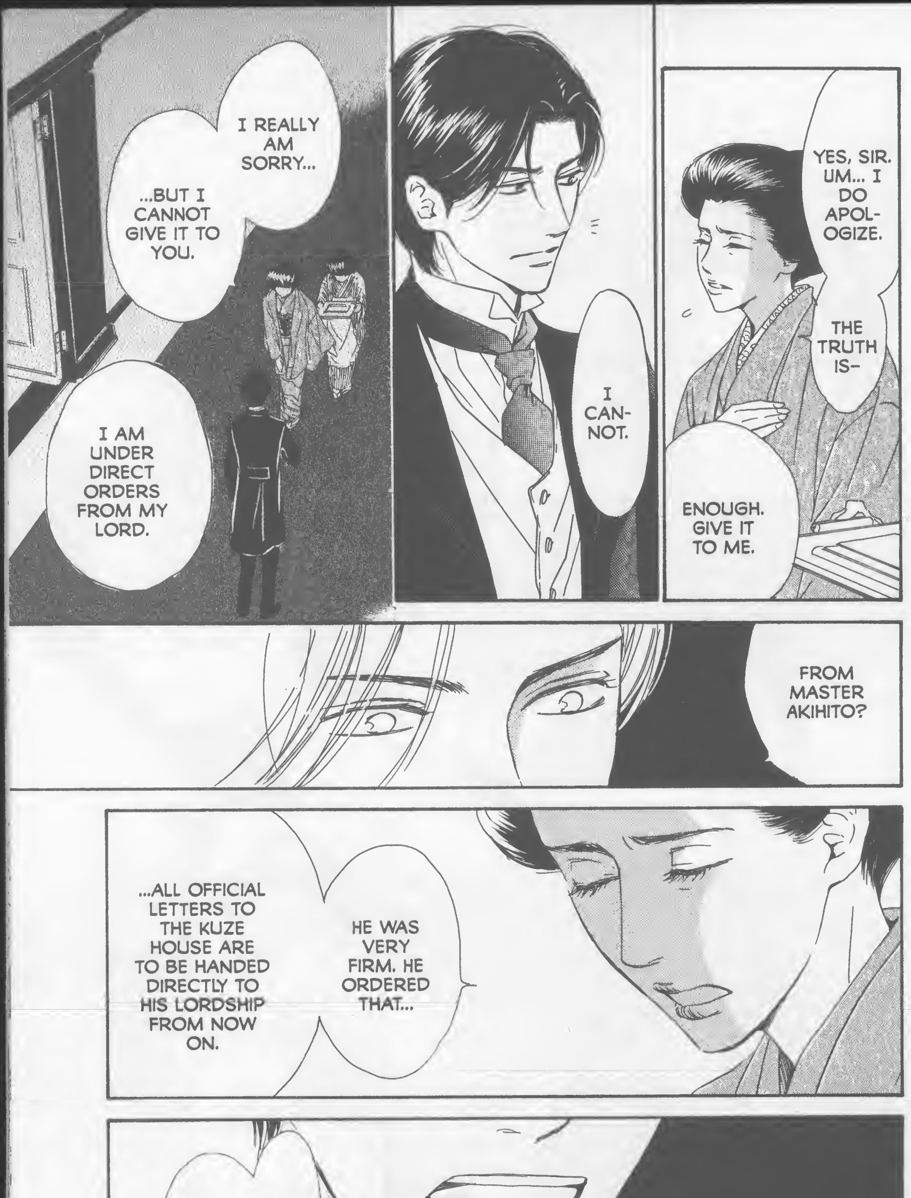
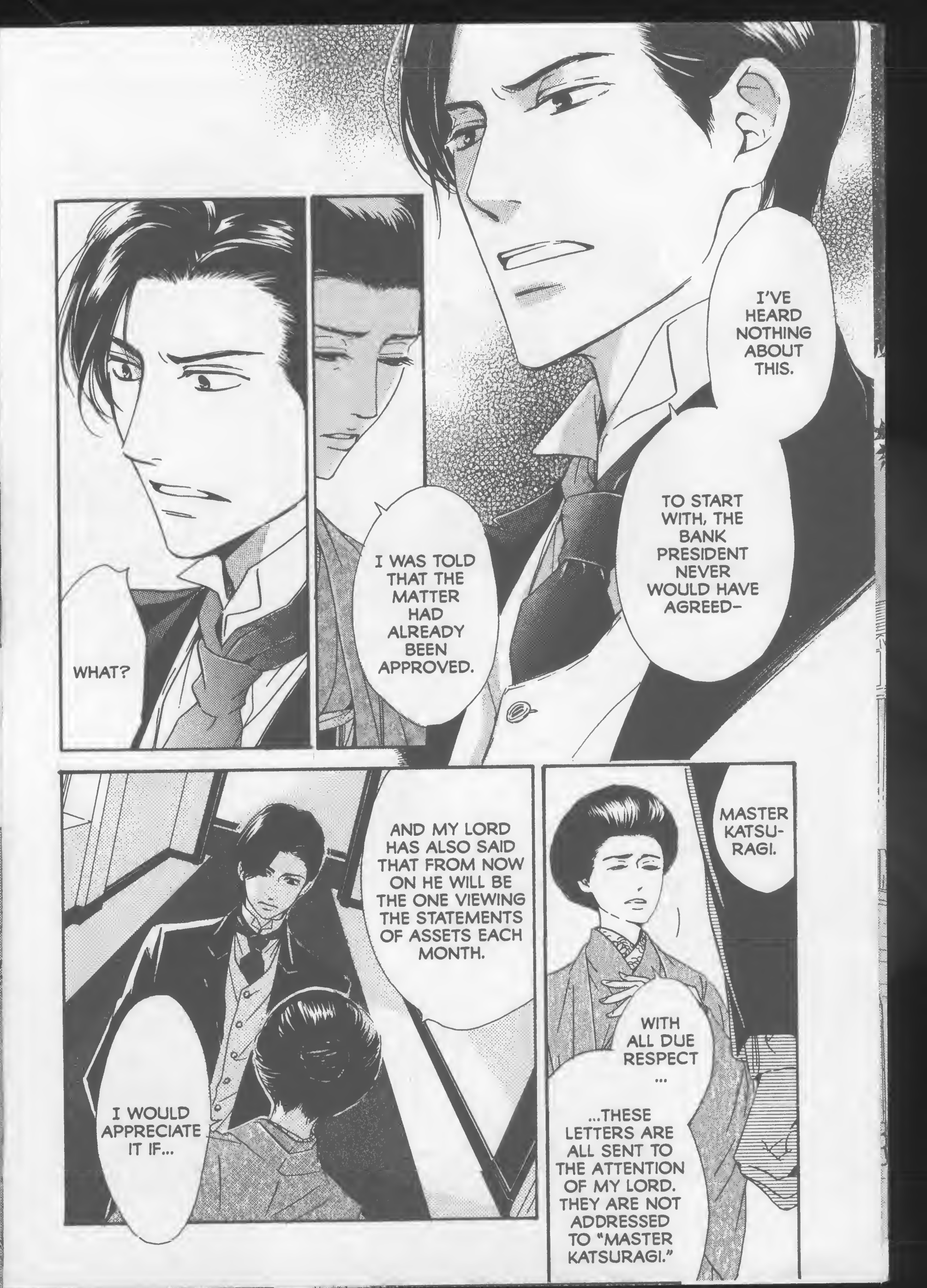
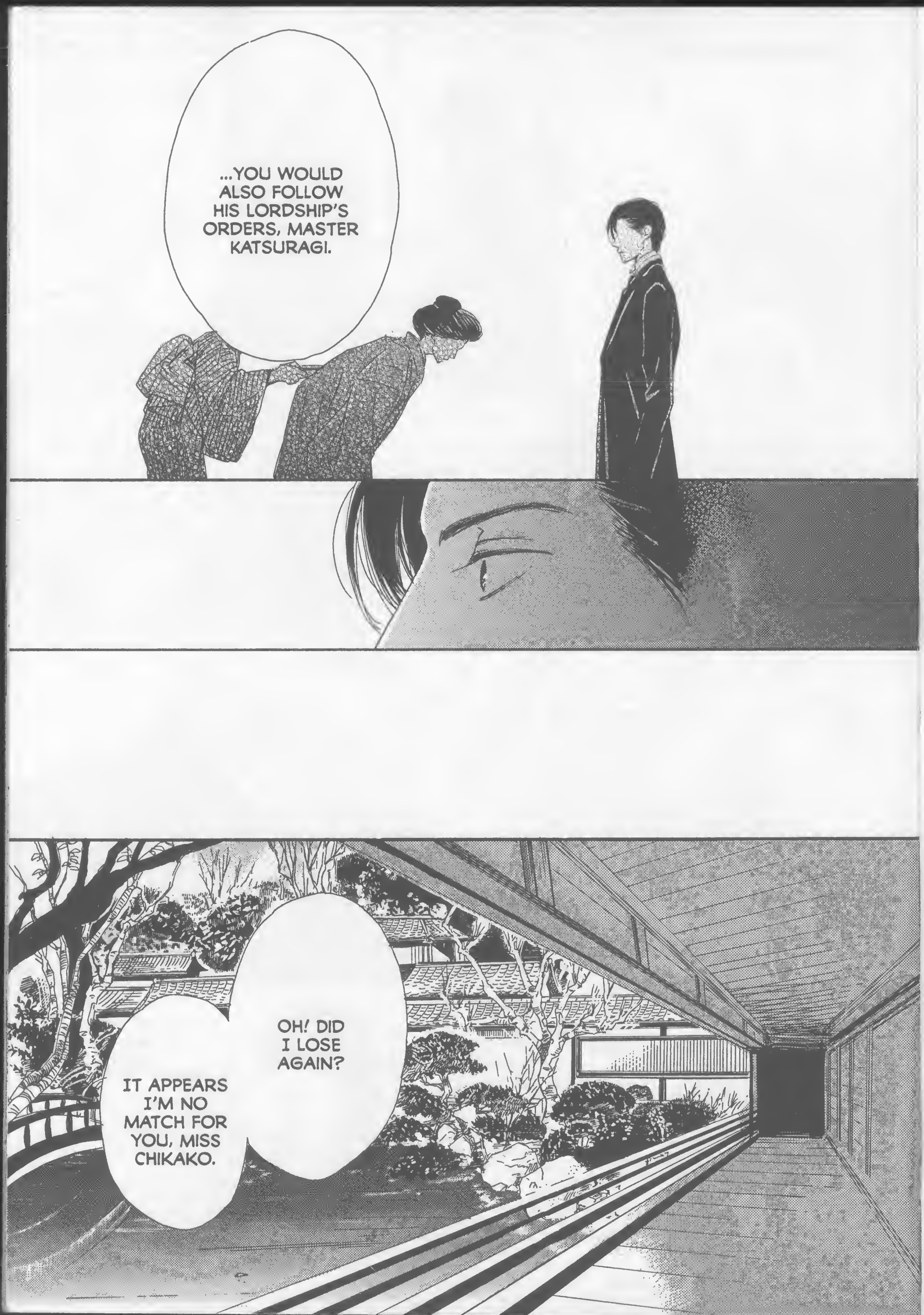
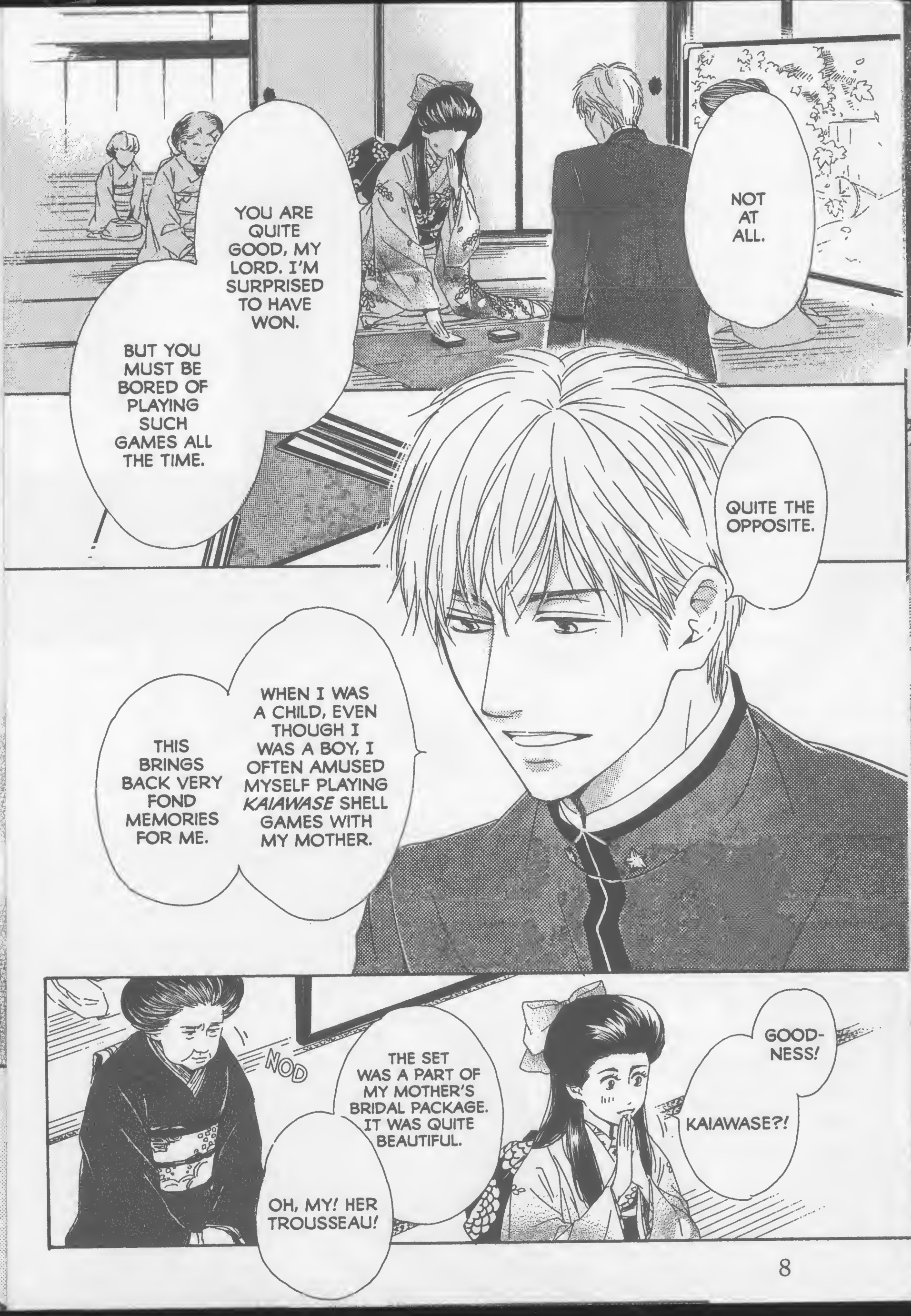
scene.11

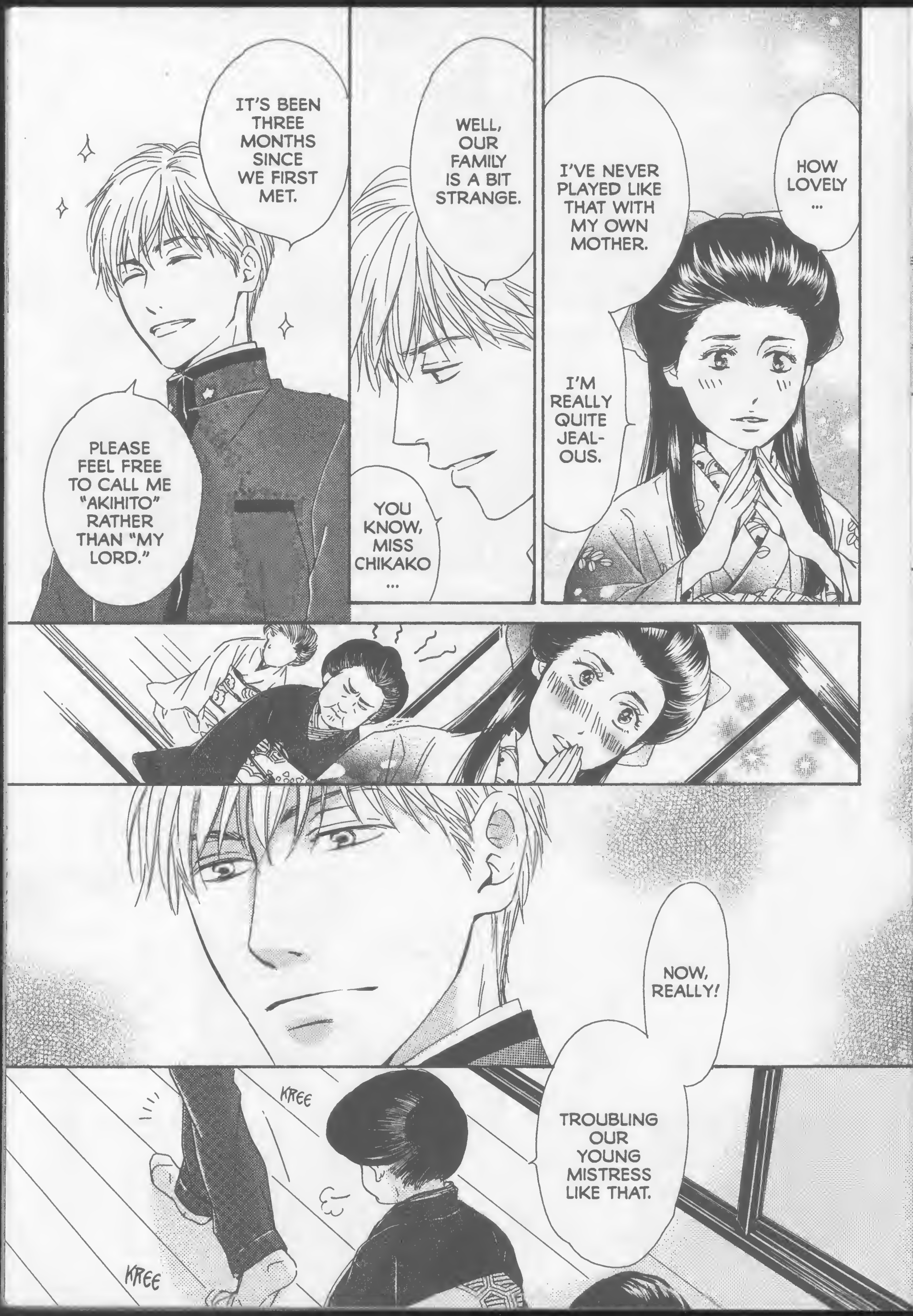

EXACTLY WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
MASTER KATSURAGI, THIS–
CHIYONO.
THAT LETTER ON THE TRAY IS FROM THE BANK, ISN'T IT?
WHY WOULD YOU, AS THE HOUSEKEEPER, HAVE ANY NEED OF IT?
ALL MATTERS RELATED TO THE HOUSE'S FINANCES ARE TO COME TO ME.

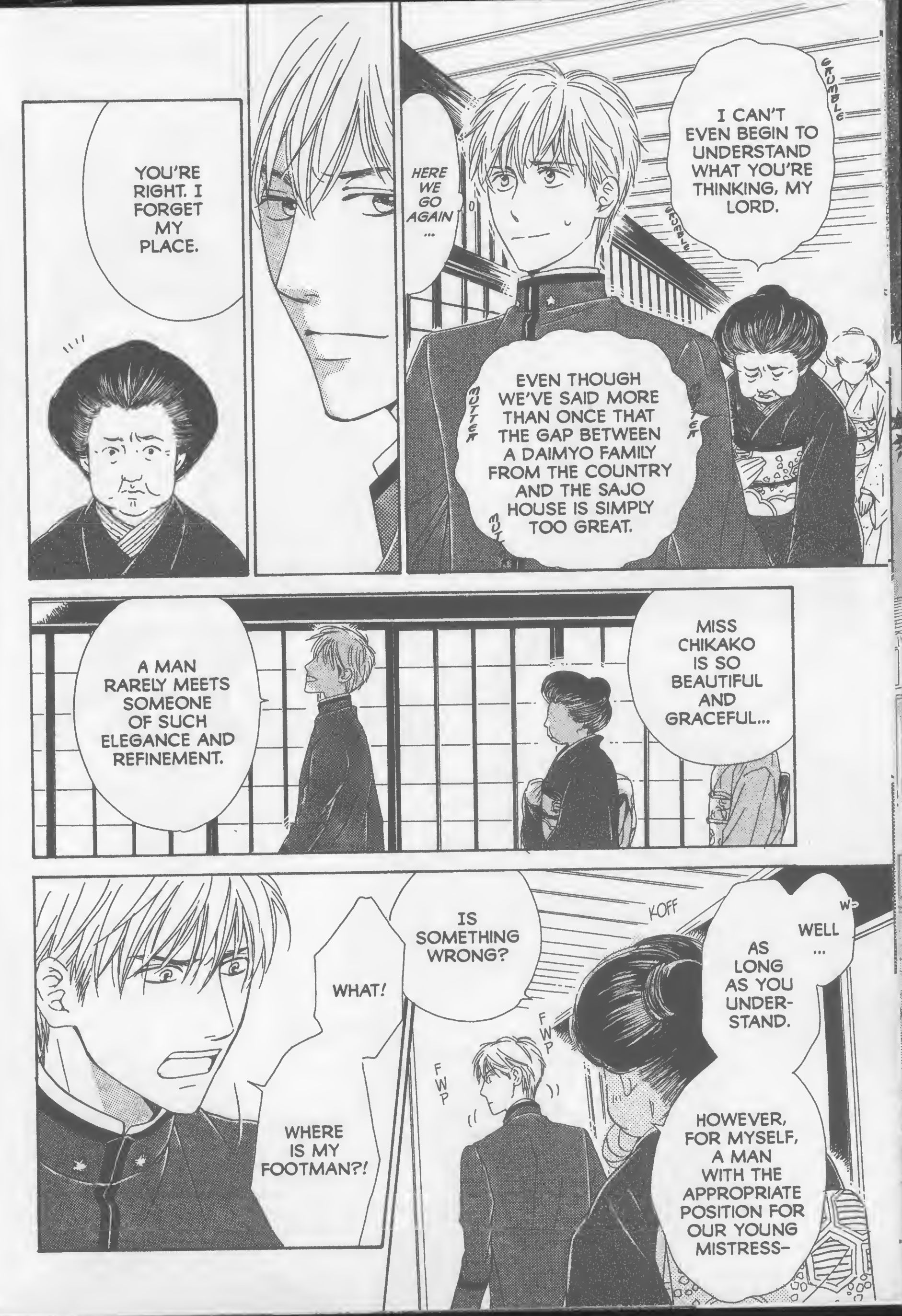

YES, SIR. UM... I DO APOLOGIZE.
THE TRUTH IS–
ENOUGH. GIVE IT TO ME.
I CANNOT.
I REALLY AM SORRY...
...BUT I CANNOT GIVE IT TO YOU.
I AM UNDER DIRECT ORDERS FROM MY LORD.
FROM MASTER AKIHITO?
HE WAS VERY FIRM. HE ORDERED THAT...
...ALL OFFICIAL LETTERS TO THE KUZE HOUSE ARE TO BE HANDED DIRECTLY TO HIS LORDSHIP FROM NOW ON.
...
IMPOSSIBLE.

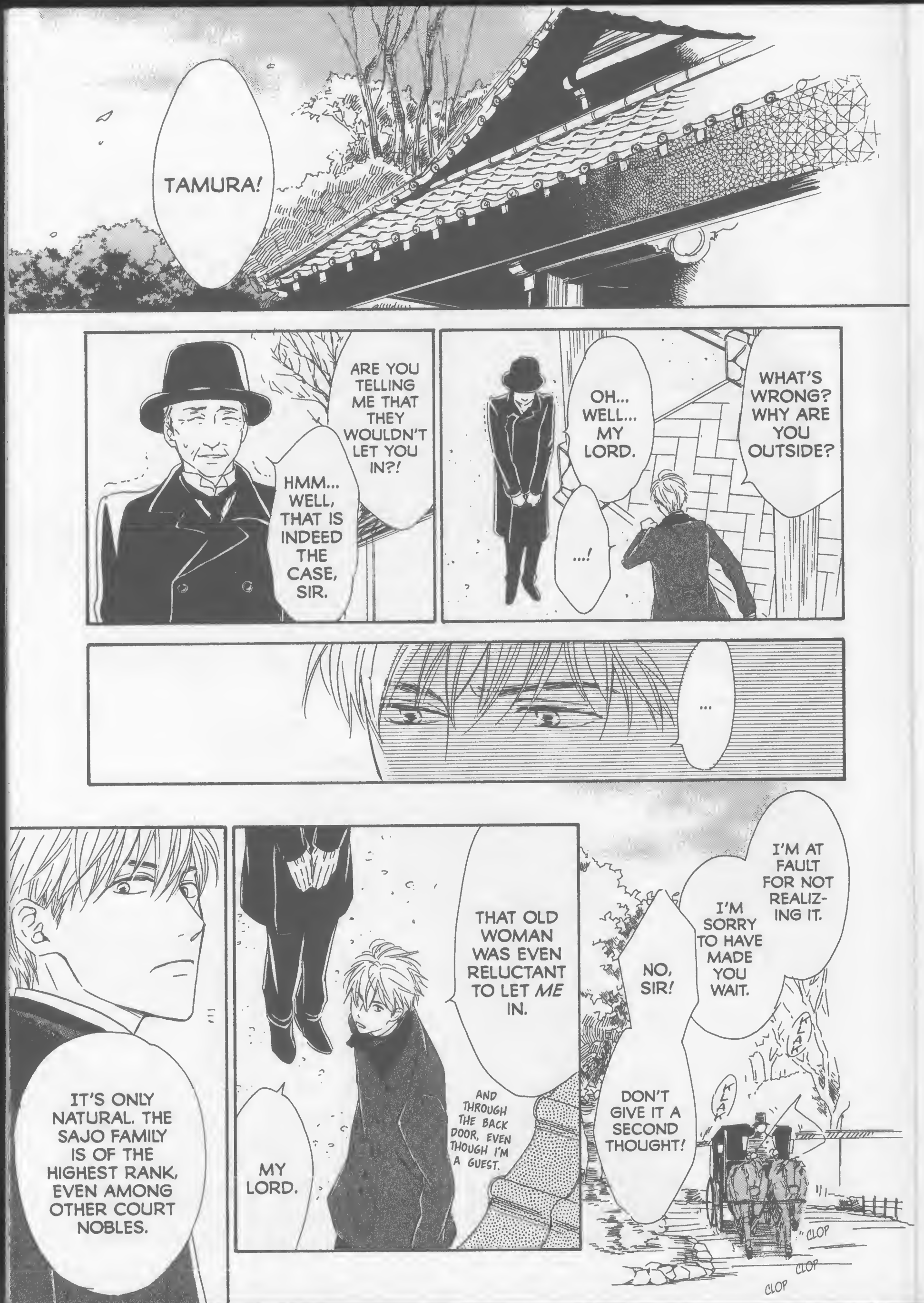

I'VE HEARD NOTHING ABOUT THIS.
TO START WITH, THE BANK PRESIDENT NEVER WOULD HAVE AGREED–
I WAS TOLD THAT THE MATTER HAD ALREADY BEEN APPROVED.
WHAT?
MASTER KATSURAGI.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT ...
...THESE LETTERS ARE ALL SENT TO THE ATTENTION OF MY LORD. THEY ARE NOT ADDRESSED TO "MASTER KATSURAGI."
AND MY LORD HAS ALSO SAID THAT FROM NOW ON HE WILL BE THE ONE VIEWING THE STATEMENTS OF ASSETS EACH MONTH.
I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF...

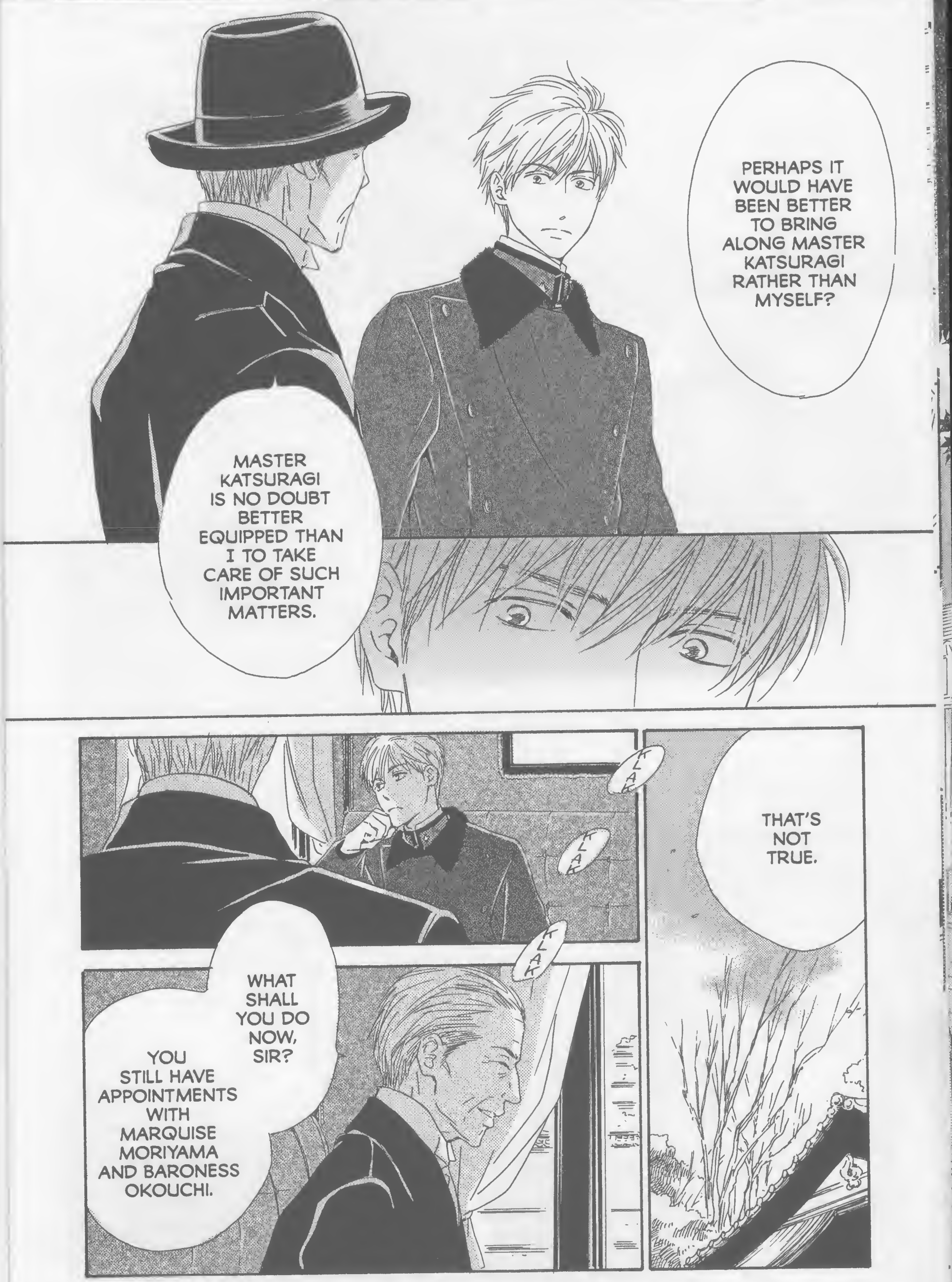

...YOU WOULD ALSO FOLLOW HIS LORDSHIP'S ORDERS, MASTER KATSURAGI.
OH! DID I LOSE AGAIN?
IT APPEARS I'M NO MATCH FOR YOU, MISS CHIKAKO.

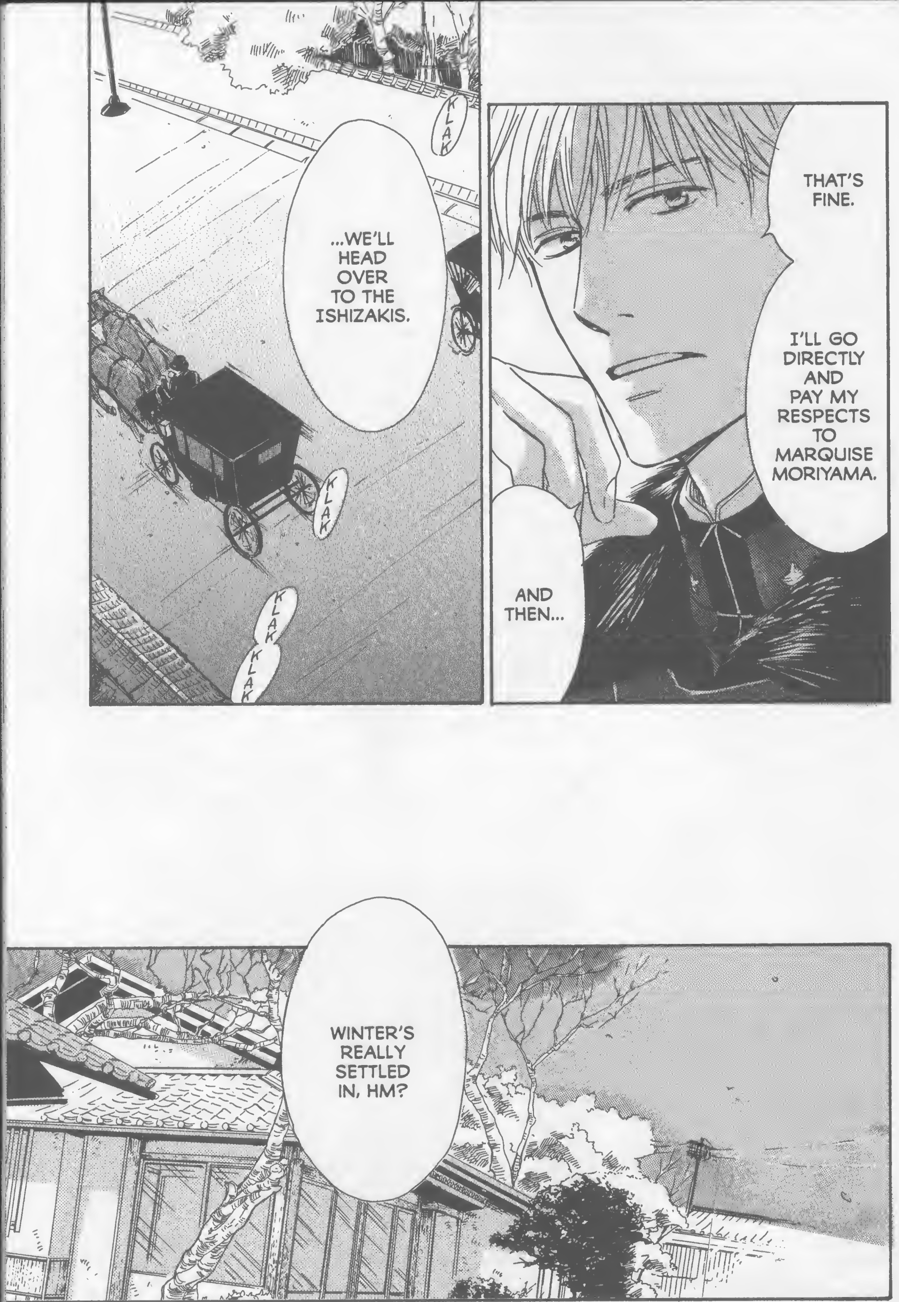

YOU ARE QUITE GOOD, MY LORD. I'M SURPRISED TO HAVE WON.
BUT YOU MUST BE BORED OF PLAYING SUCH GAMES ALL THE TIME.
NOT AT ALL.
QUITE THE OPPOSITE.
WHEN I WAS A CHILD, EVEN THOUGH I WAS A BOY, I OFTEN AMUSED MYSELF PLAYING *KAIAWASE* SHELL GAMES WITH MY MOTHER.
THIS BRINGS BACK VERY FOND MEMORIES FOR ME.
GOOD-NESS!
KAIAWASE?!
THE SET WAS A PART OF MY MOTHER'S BRIDAL PACKAGE. IT WAS QUITE BEAUTIFUL.
NOD
OH, MY! HER TROUSSEAU!

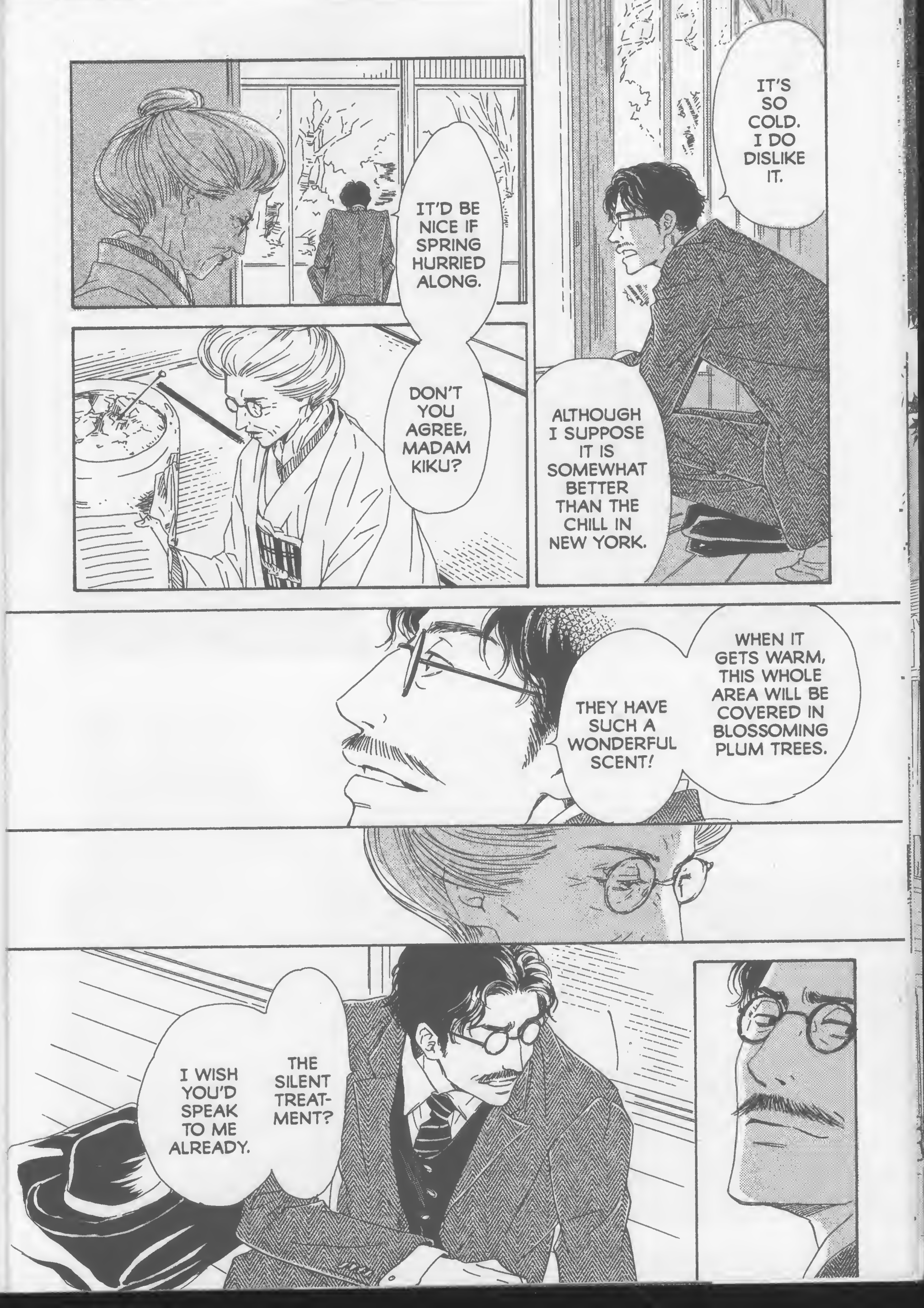

HOW LOVELY ...
I'VE NEVER PLAYED LIKE THAT WITH MY OWN MOTHER.
I'M REALLY QUITE JEAL-OUS.
WELL, OUR FAMILY IS A BIT STRANGE.
YOU KNOW, MISS CHIKAKO ...
IT'S BEEN THREE MONTHS SINCE WE FIRST MET.
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CALL ME "AKIHITO" RATHER THAN "MY LORD."
NOW, REALLY!
TROUBLING OUR YOUNG MISTRESS LIKE THAT.
KREE
KREE

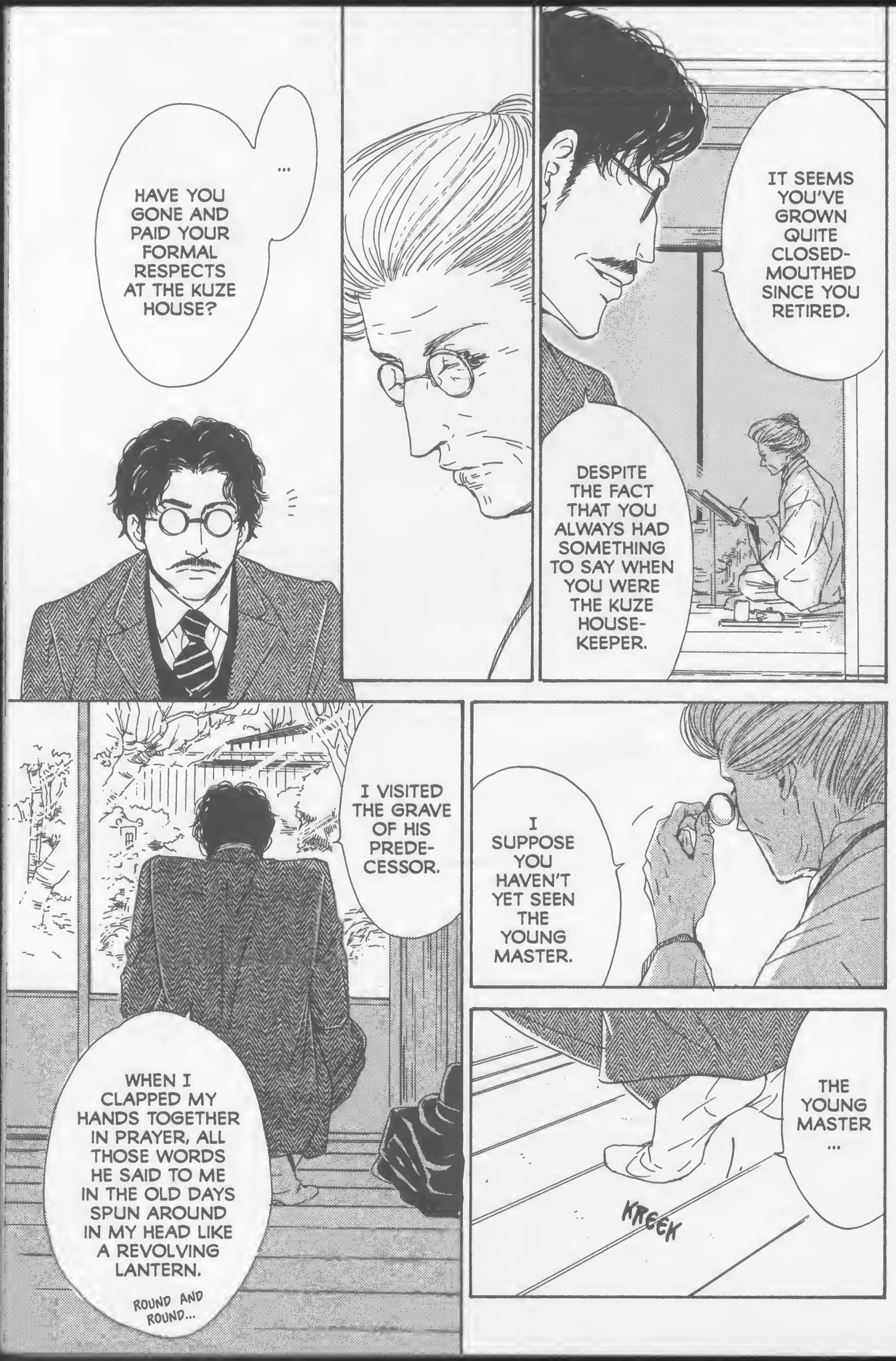

GRUMBLE GRUMBLE
I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, MY LORD.
HERE WE GO AGAIN...
EVEN THOUGH WE'VE SAID MORE THAN ONCE THAT THE GAP BETWEEN A DAIMYO FAMILY FROM THE COUNTRY AND THE SAJO HOUSE IS SIMPLY TOO GREAT.
MUTTER MUTTER
YOU'RE RIGHT. I FORGET MY PLACE.
MISS CHIKAKO IS SO BEAUTIFUL AND GRACEFUL...
A MAN RARELY MEETS SOMEONE OF SUCH ELEGANCE AND REFINEMENT.
W-WELL... AS LONG AS YOU UNDERSTAND.
HOWEVER, FOR MYSELF, A MAN WITH THE APPROPRIATE POSITION FOR OUR YOUNG MISTRESS–
KOFF
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
FWP FWP
WHAT!
WHERE IS MY FOOTMAN?!

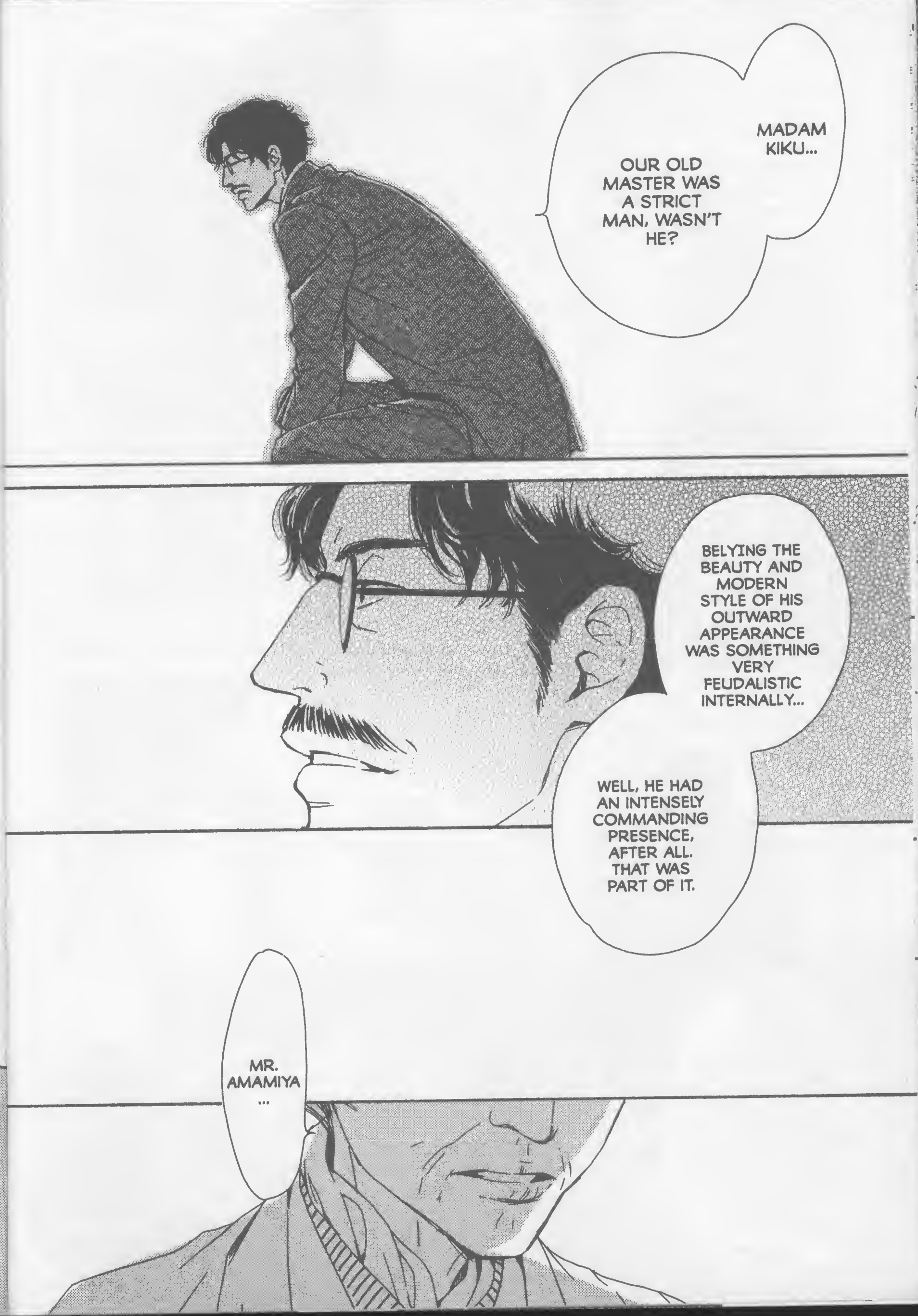

TAMURA!
WHAT'S WRONG? WHY ARE YOU OUTSIDE?
OH... WELL... MY LORD.
...!
ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT THEY WOULDN'T LET YOU IN?!
HMM... WELL, THAT IS INDEED THE CASE, SIR.
...
I'M AT FAULT FOR NOT REALIZING IT.
I'M SORRY TO HAVE MADE YOU WAIT.
NO, SIR!
DON'T GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT!
KLAK KLAK
CLOP CLOP CLOP
THAT OLD WOMAN WAS EVEN RELUCTANT TO LET ME IN.
AND THROUGH THE BACK DOOR, EVEN THOUGH I'M A GUEST.
MY LORD.
IT'S ONLY NATURAL. THE SAJO FAMILY IS OF THE HIGHEST RANK, EVEN AMONG OTHER COURT NOBLES.

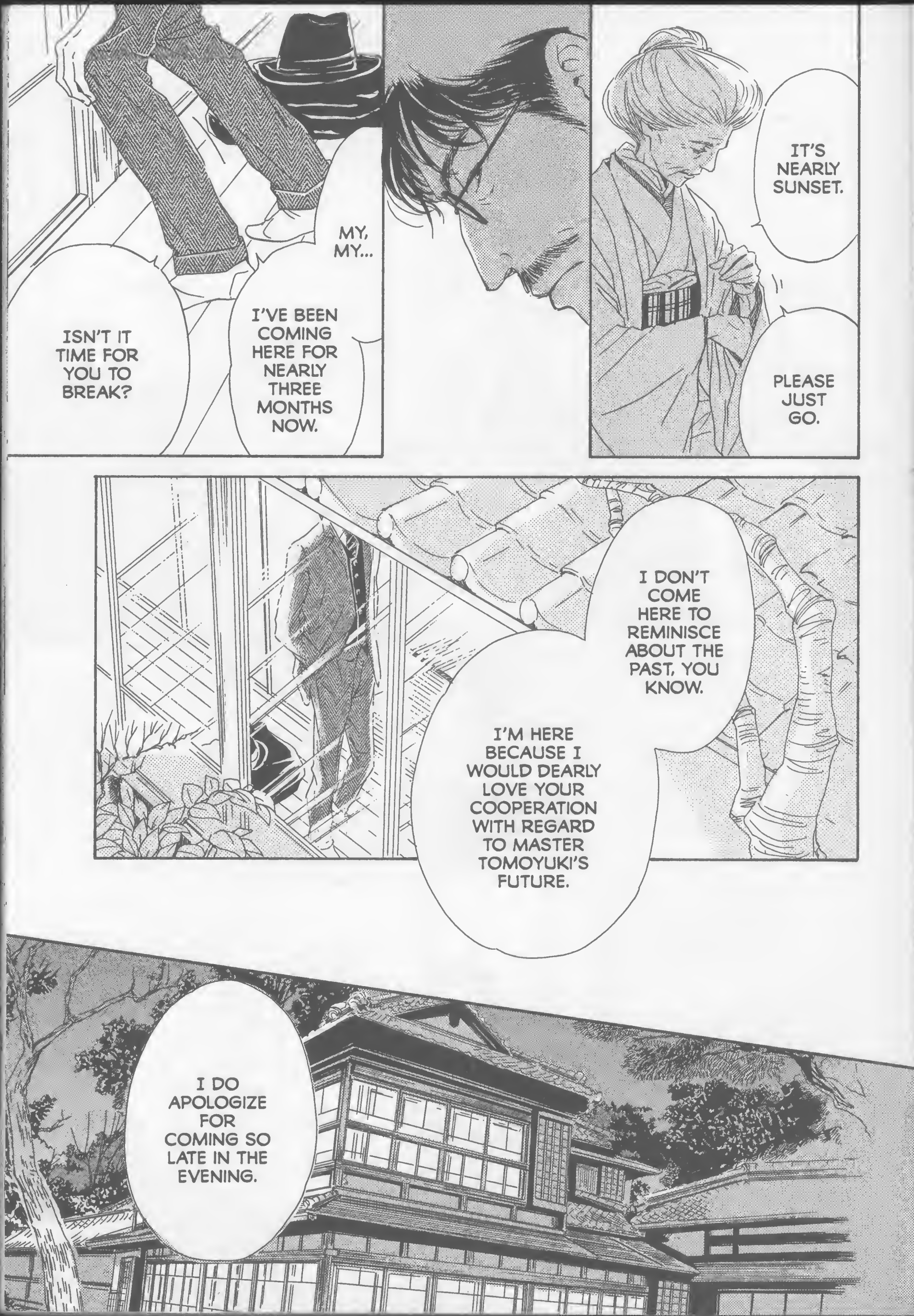

PERHAPS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO BRING ALONG MASTER KATSURAGI RATHER THAN MYSELF?
MASTER KATSURAGI IS NO DOUBT BETTER EQUIPPED THAN I TO TAKE CARE OF SUCH IMPORTANT MATTERS.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
WHAT SHALL YOU DO NOW, SIR?
YOU STILL HAVE APPOINTMENTS WITH MARQUISE MORIYAMA AND BARONESS OKOUCHI.

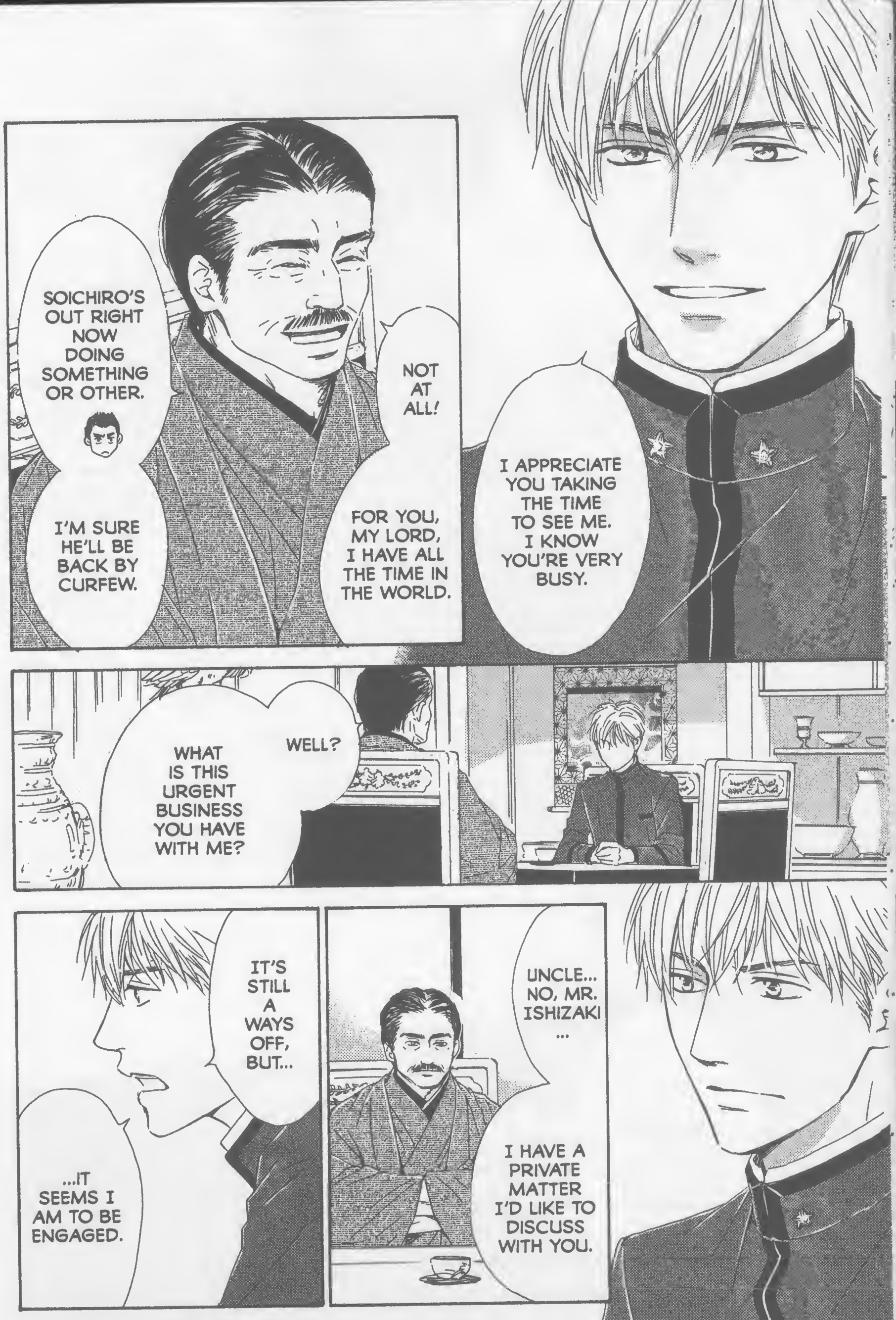

THAT'S FINE.
I'LL GO DIRECTLY AND PAY MY RESPECTS TO MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
AND THEN...
...WE'LL HEAD OVER TO THE ISHIZAKIS.
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
WINTER'S REALLY SETTLED IN, HM?

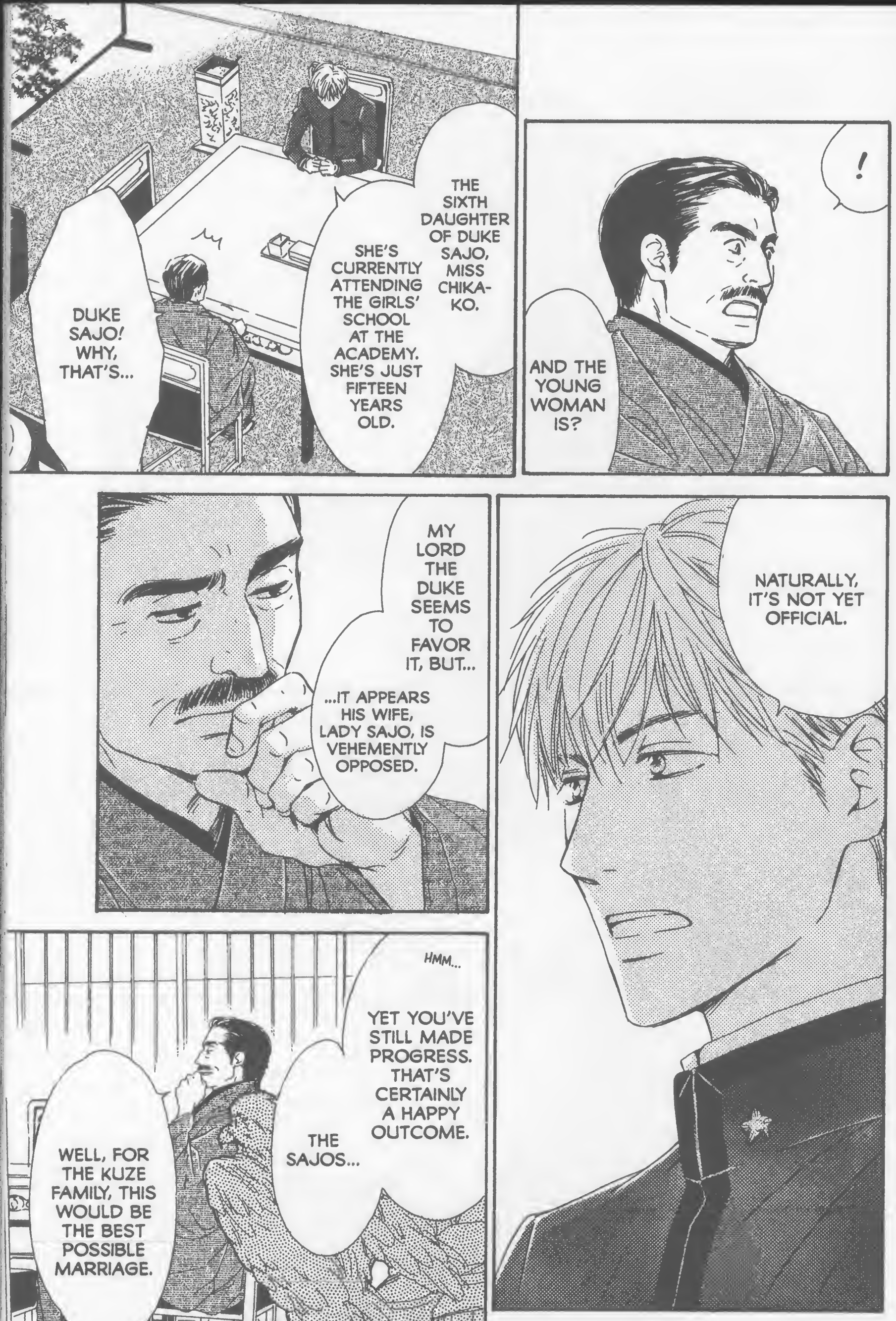

IT'S SO COLD. I DO DISLIKE IT.
ALTHOUGH I SUPPOSE IT IS SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN THE CHILL IN NEW YORK.
IT'D BE NICE IF SPRING HURRIED ALONG.
DON'T YOU AGREE, MADAM KIKU?
WHEN IT GETS WARM, THIS WHOLE AREA WILL BE COVERED IN BLOSSOMING PLUM TREES.
THEY HAVE SUCH A WONDERFUL SCENT!
THE SILENT TREATMENT?
I WISH YOU'D SPEAK TO ME ALREADY.

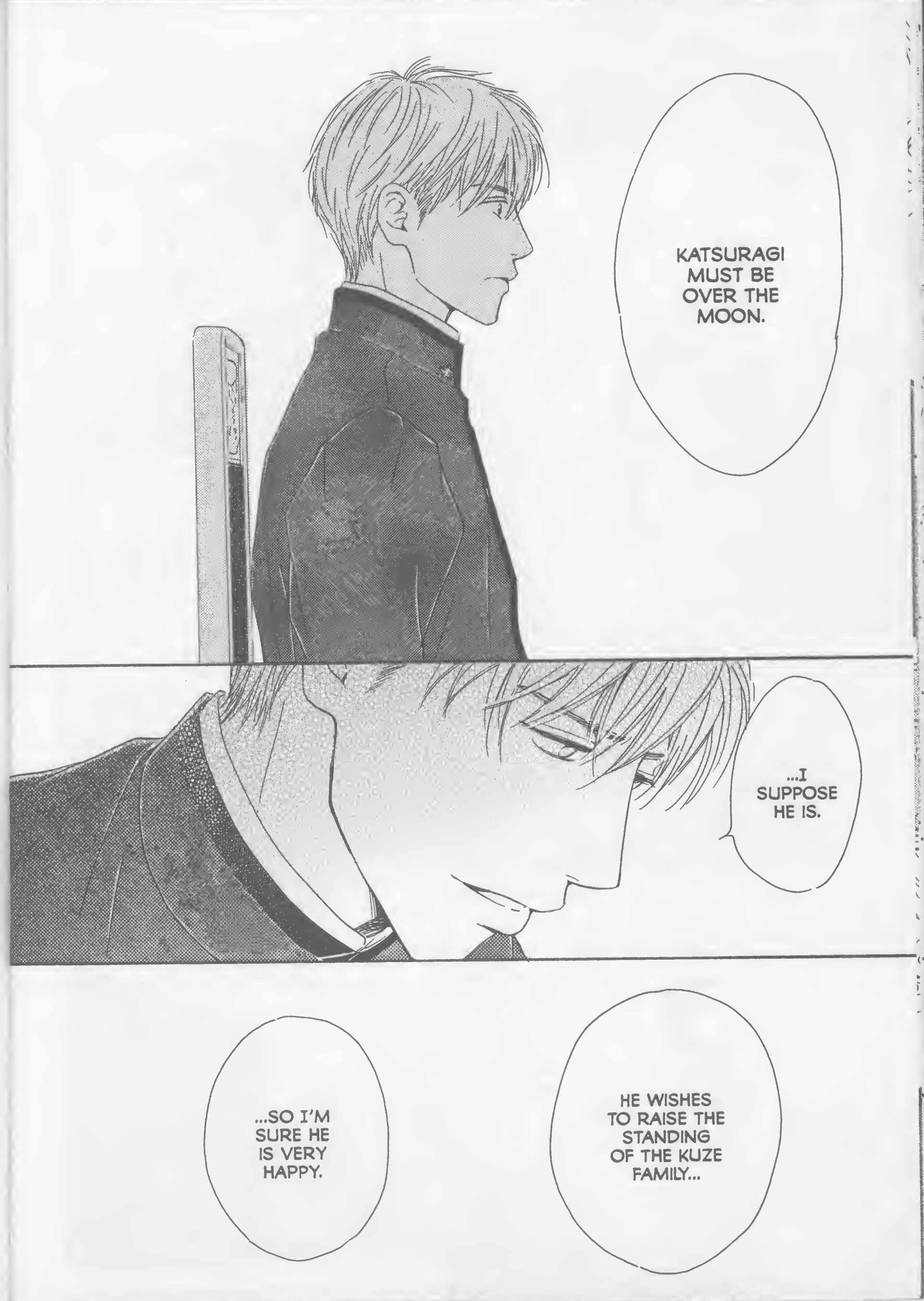

IT SEEMS YOU'VE GROWN QUITE CLOSED-MOUTHED SINCE YOU RETIRED.
DESPITE THE FACT THAT YOU ALWAYS HAD SOMETHING TO SAY WHEN YOU WERE THE KUZE HOUSEKEEPER.
...
HAVE YOU GONE AND PAID YOUR FORMAL RESPECTS AT THE KUZE HOUSE?
I SUPPOSE YOU HAVEN'T YET SEEN THE YOUNG MASTER.
THE YOUNG MASTER...
KREEK
I VISITED THE GRAVE OF HIS PREDECESSOR.
WHEN I CLAPPED MY HANDS TOGETHER IN PRAYER, ALL THOSE WORDS HE SAID TO ME IN THE OLD DAYS SPUN AROUND IN MY HEAD LIKE A REVOLVING LANTERN.
ROUND AND ROUND...

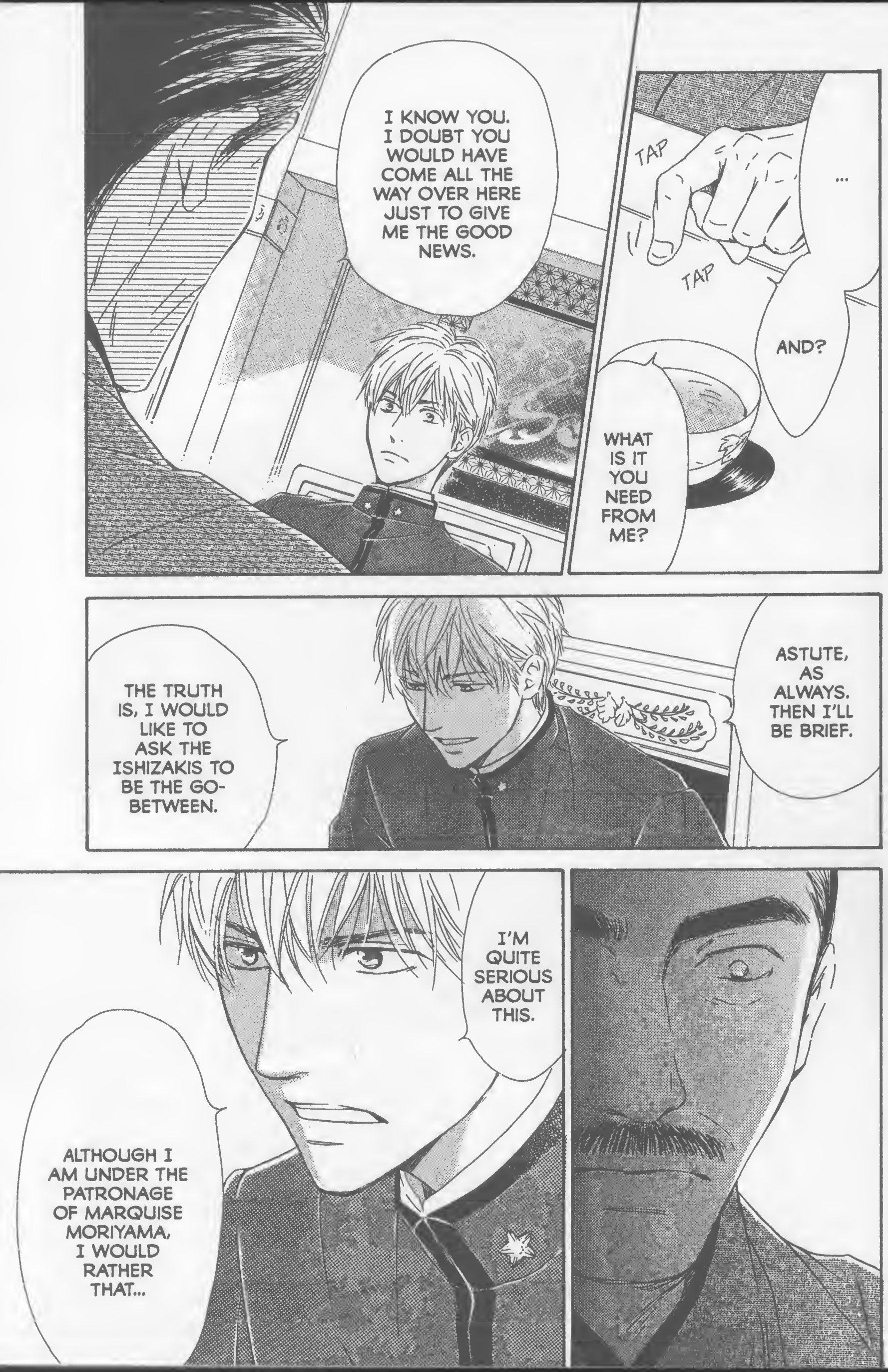

MADAM KIKU...
OUR OLD MASTER WAS A STRICT MAN, WASN'T HE?
BELYING THE BEAUTY AND MODERN STYLE OF HIS OUTWARD APPEARANCE WAS SOMETHING VERY FEUDALISTIC INTERNALLY...
WELL, HE HAD AN INTENSELY COMMANDING PRESENCE, AFTER ALL. THAT WAS PART OF IT.
MR. AMAMIYA...

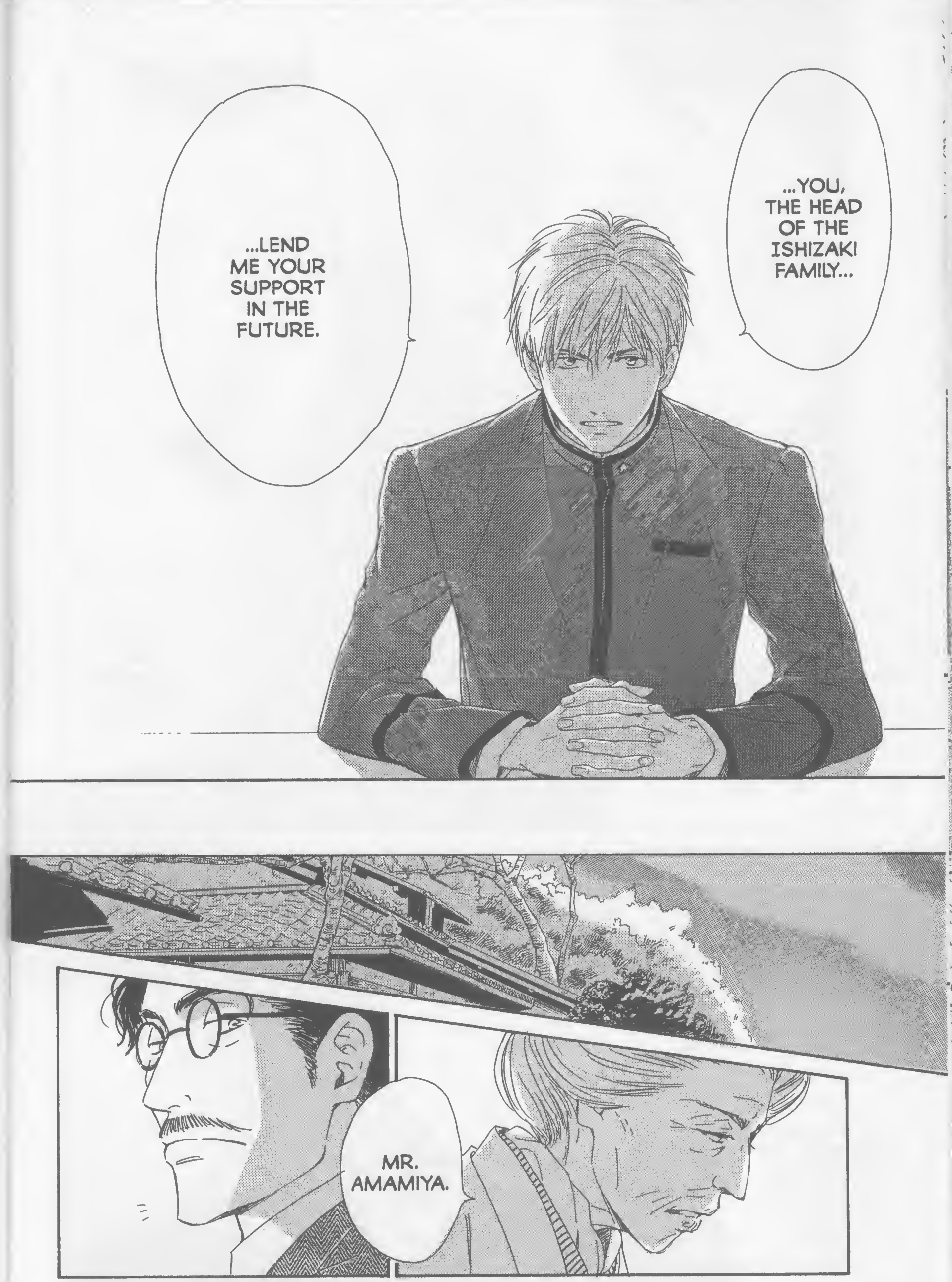

IT'S NEARLY SUNSET.
PLEASE JUST GO.
MY, MY...
I'VE BEEN COMING HERE FOR NEARLY THREE MONTHS NOW.
ISN'T IT TIME FOR YOU TO BREAK?
I DON'T COME HERE TO REMINISCE ABOUT THE PAST, YOU KNOW.
I'M HERE BECAUSE I WOULD DEARLY LOVE YOUR COOPERATION WITH REGARD TO MASTER TOMOYUKI'S FUTURE.
I DO APOLOGIZE FOR COMING SO LATE IN THE EVENING.

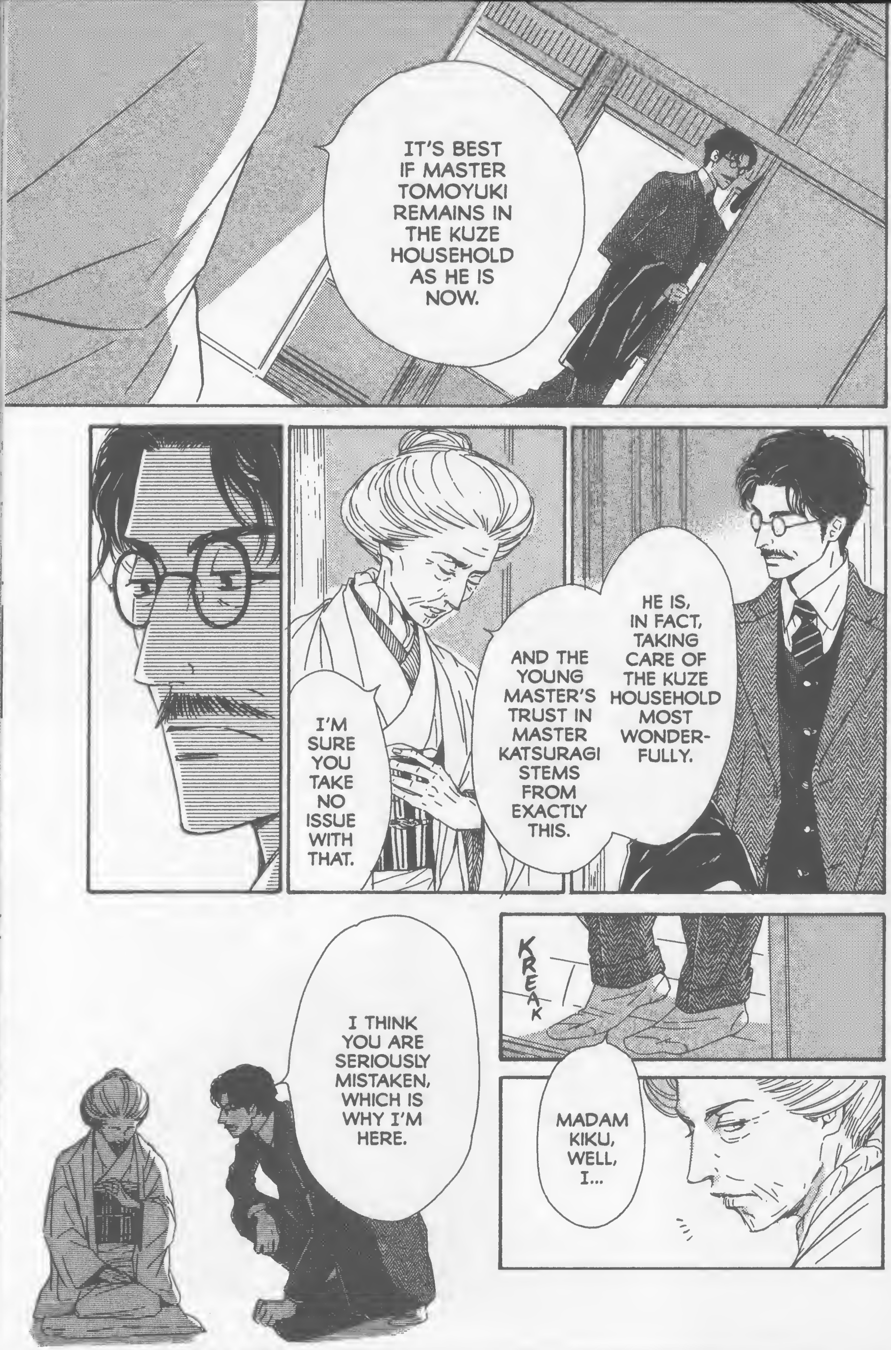

I APPRECIATE YOU TAKING THE TIME TO SEE ME. I KNOW YOU'RE VERY BUSY.
NOT AT ALL!
FOR YOU, MY LORD, I HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD.
SOICHIRO'S OUT RIGHT NOW DOING SOMETHING OR OTHER.
I'M SURE HE'LL BE BACK BY CURFEW.
WELL?
WHAT IS THIS URGENT BUSINESS YOU HAVE WITH ME?
UNCLE... NO, MR. ISHIZAKI...
I HAVE A PRIVATE MATTER I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH YOU.
IT'S STILL A WAYS OFF, BUT...
...IT SEEMS I AM TO BE ENGAGED.

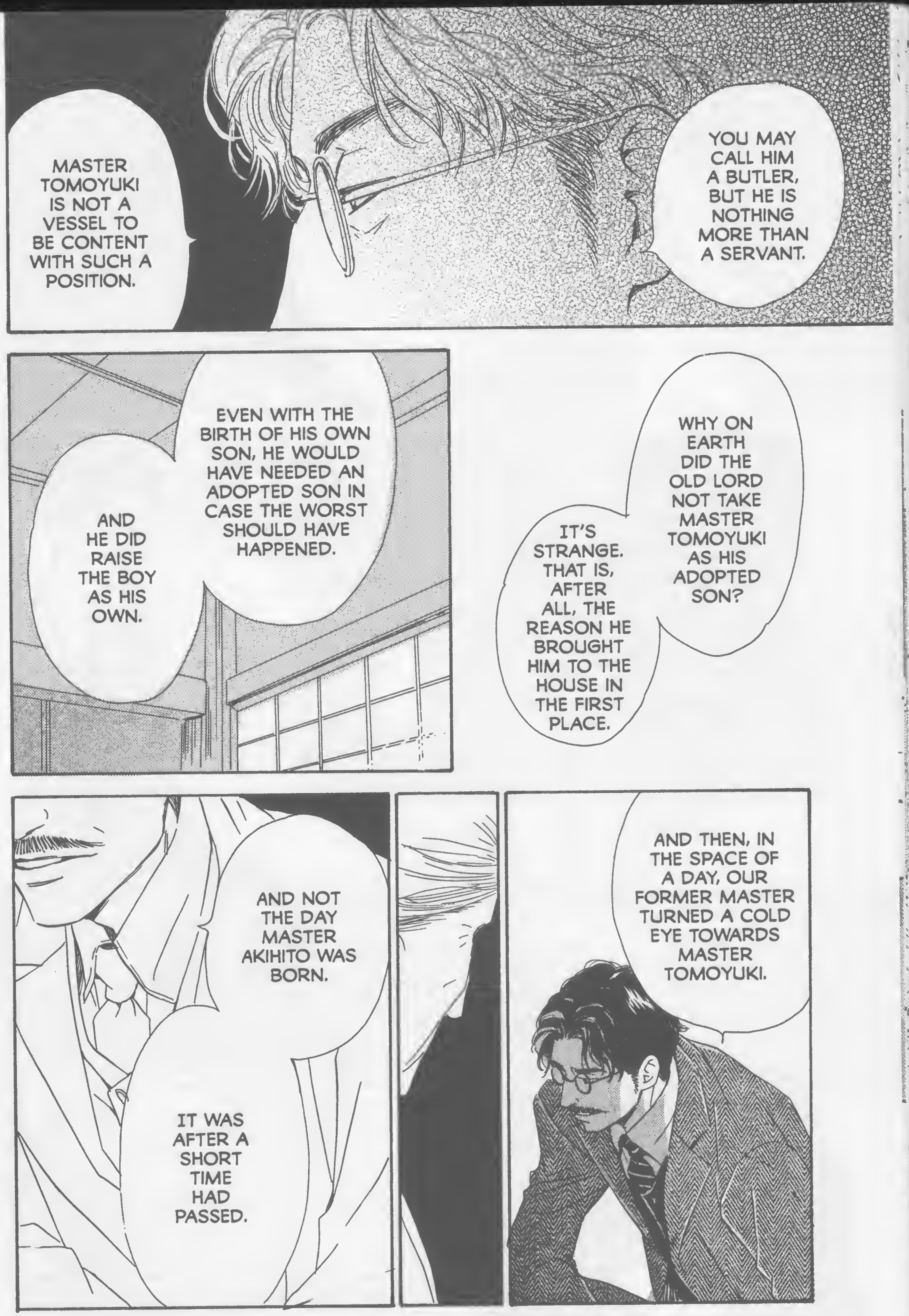

!
AND THE YOUNG WOMAN IS?
THE SIXTH DAUGHTER OF DUKE SAJO, MISS CHIKAKO.
SHE'S CURRENTLY ATTENDING THE GIRLS' SCHOOL AT THE ACADEMY. SHE'S JUST FIFTEEN YEARS OLD.
DUKE SAJO! WHY, THAT'S...
NATURALLY, IT'S NOT YET OFFICIAL.
MY LORD THE DUKE SEEMS TO FAVOR IT, BUT...
...IT APPEARS HIS WIFE, LADY SAJO, IS VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED.
HMM...
YET YOU'VE STILL MADE PROGRESS. THAT'S CERTAINLY A HAPPY OUTCOME.
THE SAJOS...
WELL, FOR THE KUZE FAMILY, THIS WOULD BE THE BEST POSSIBLE MARRIAGE.

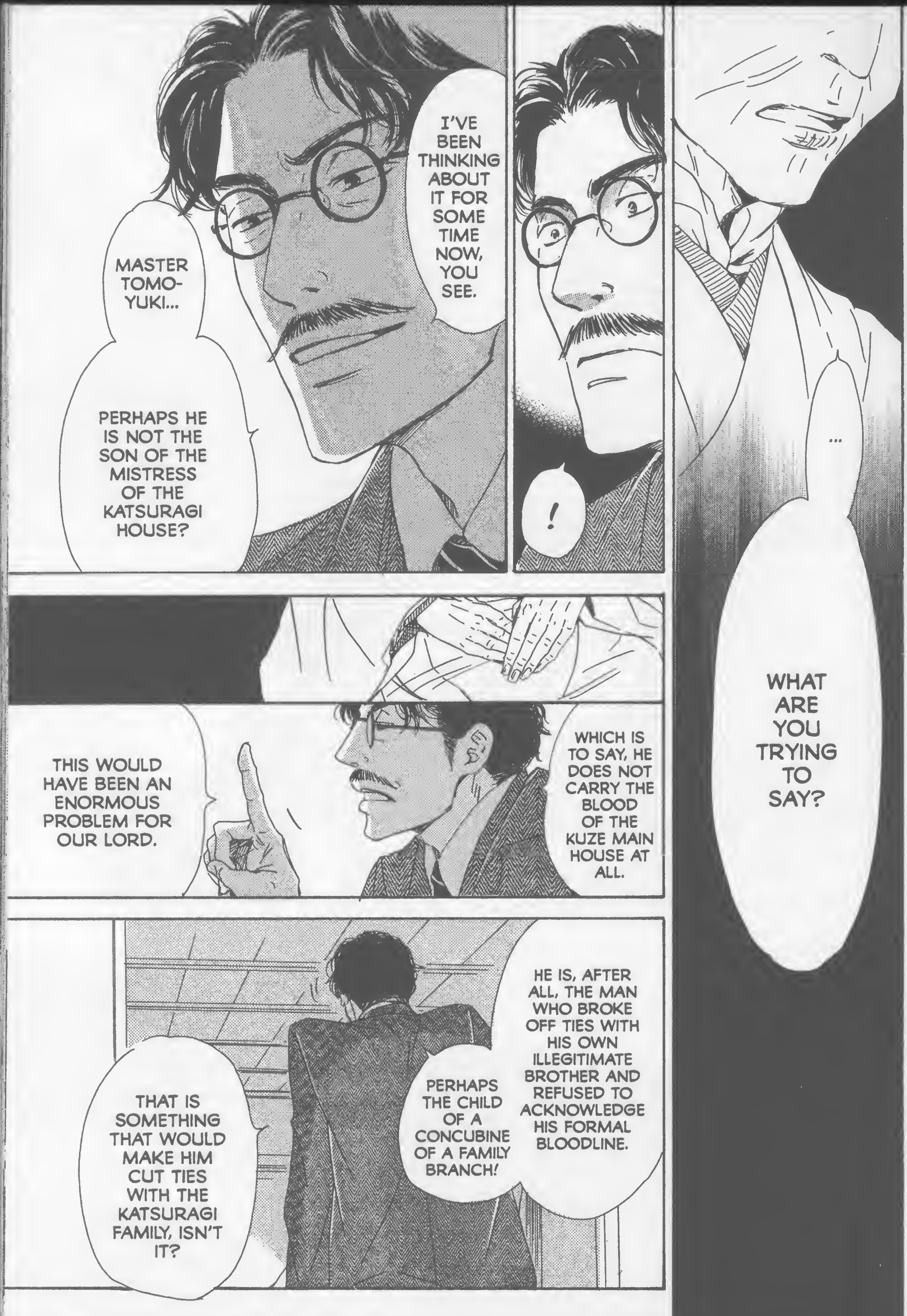

KATSURAGI MUST BE OVER THE MOON.
...I SUPPOSE HE IS.
HE WISHES TO RAISE THE STANDING OF THE KUZE FAMILY...
...SO I'M SURE HE IS VERY HAPPY.

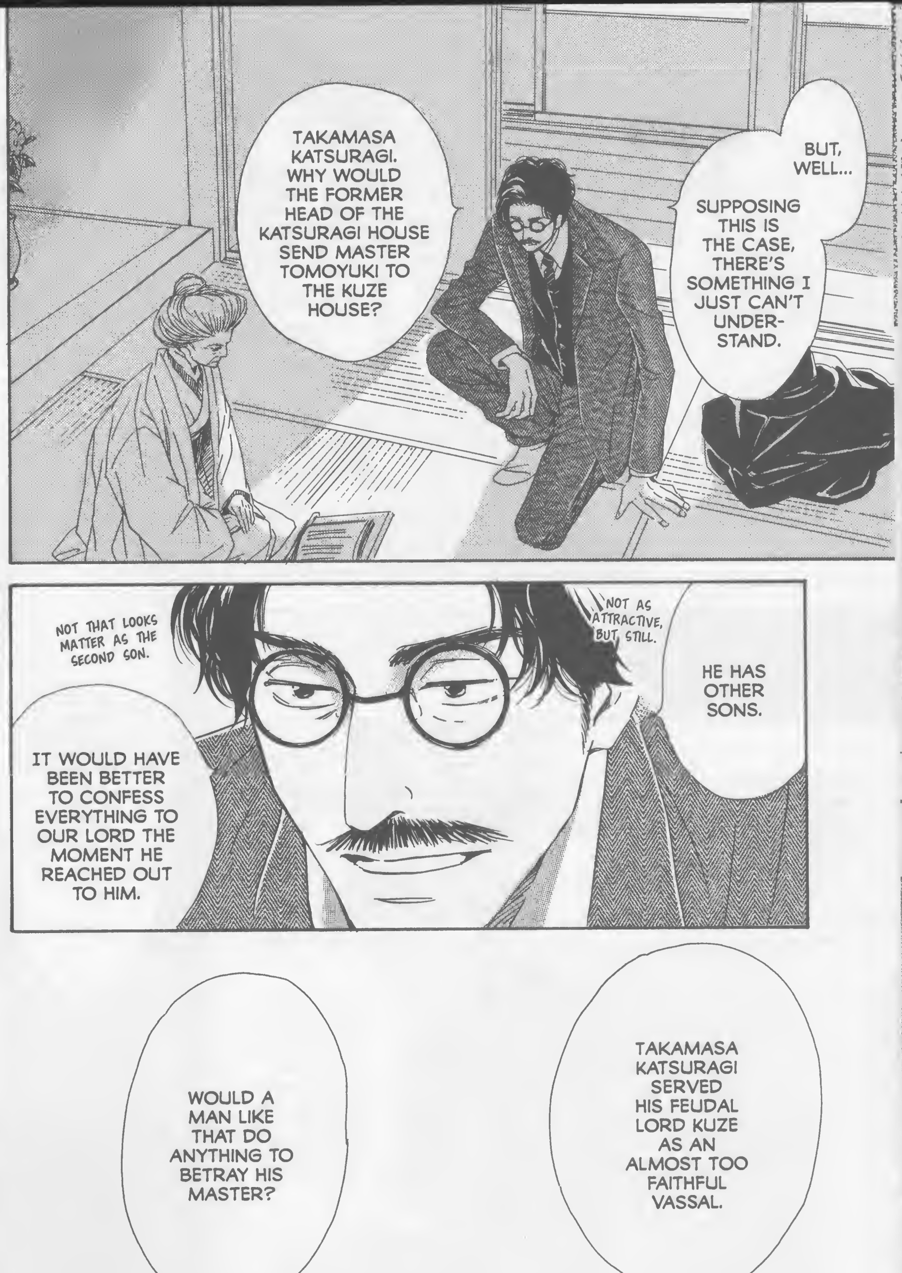

...
TAP
TAP
AND?
WHAT IS IT YOU NEED FROM ME?
I KNOW YOU. I DOUBT YOU WOULD HAVE COME ALL THE WAY OVER HERE JUST TO GIVE ME THE GOOD NEWS.
ASTUTE, AS ALWAYS. THEN I'LL BE BRIEF.
THE TRUTH IS, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK THE ISHIZAKIS TO BE THE GO-BETWEEN.
I'M QUITE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS.
ALTHOUGH I AM UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA, I WOULD RATHER THAT...

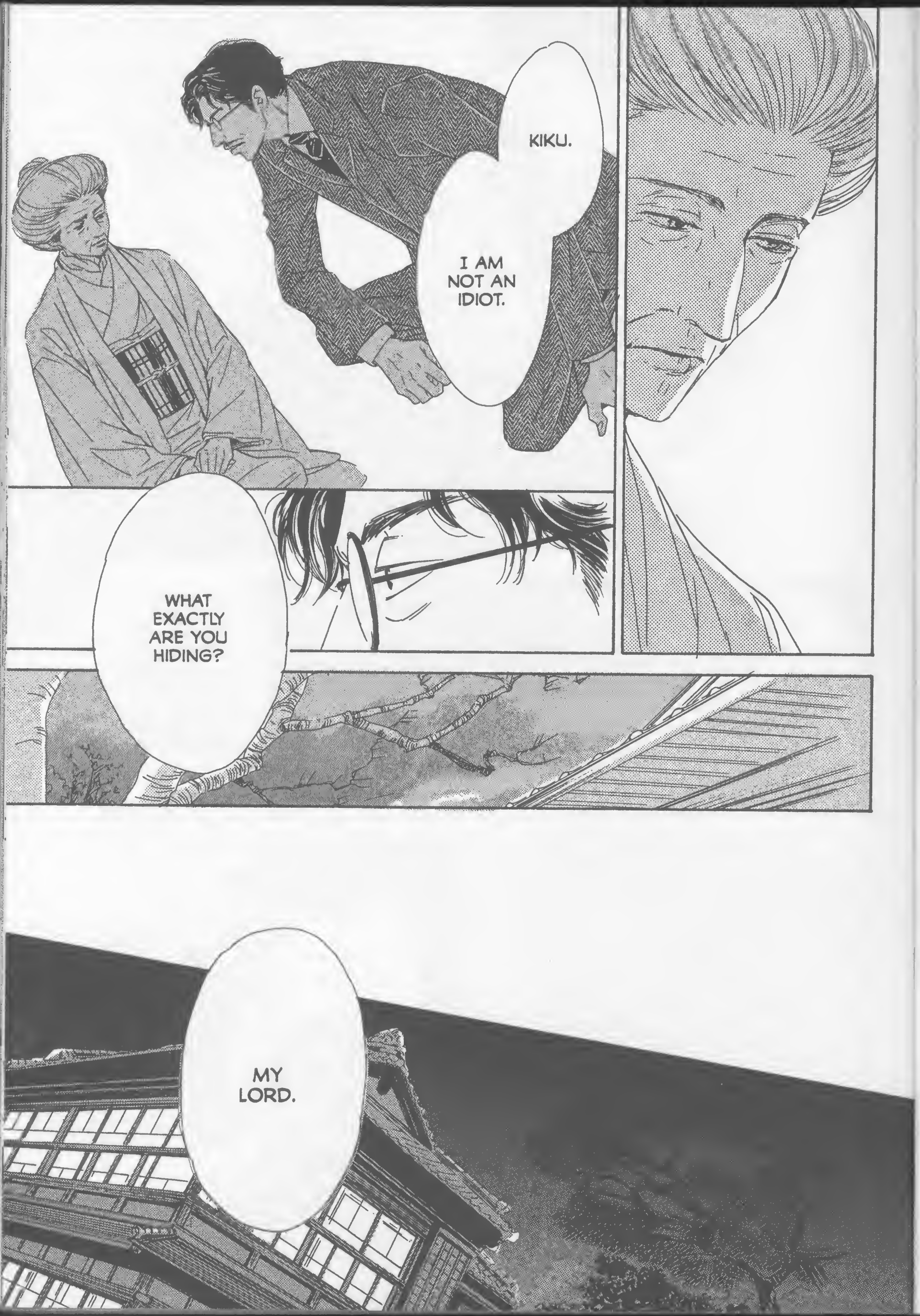

...YOU, THE HEAD OF THE ISHIZAKI FAMILY...
...LEND ME YOUR SUPPORT IN THE FUTURE.
MR. AMAMIYA.

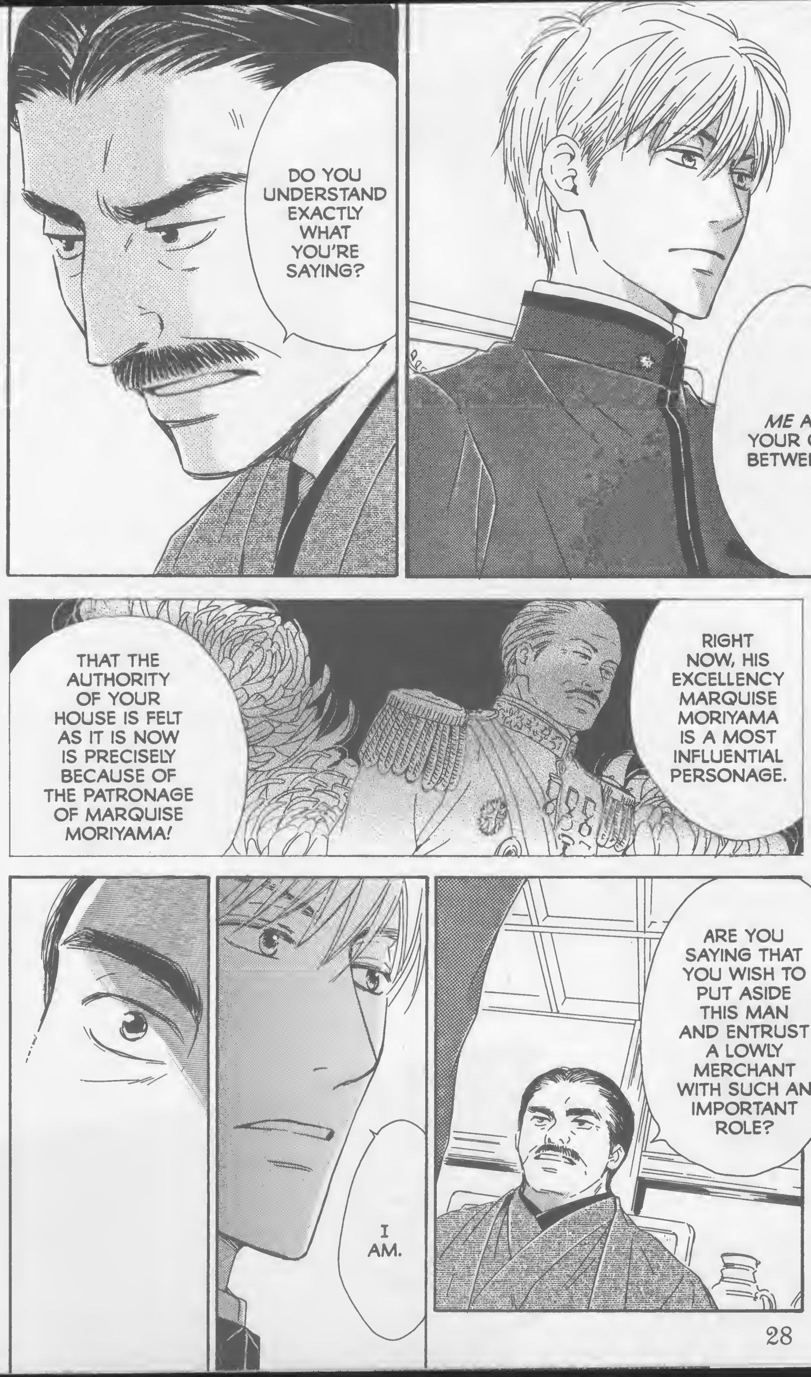

IT'S BEST IF MASTER TOMOYUKI REMAINS IN THE KUZE HOUSEHOLD AS HE IS NOW.
HE IS, IN FACT, TAKING CARE OF THE KUZE HOUSEHOLD MOST WONDERFULLY.
AND THE YOUNG MASTER'S TRUST IN MASTER KATSURAGI STEMS FROM EXACTLY THIS.
I'M SURE YOU TAKE NO ISSUE WITH THAT.
KREAK
MADAM KIKU, WELL, I...
I THINK YOU ARE SERIOUSLY MISTAKEN, WHICH IS WHY I'M HERE.

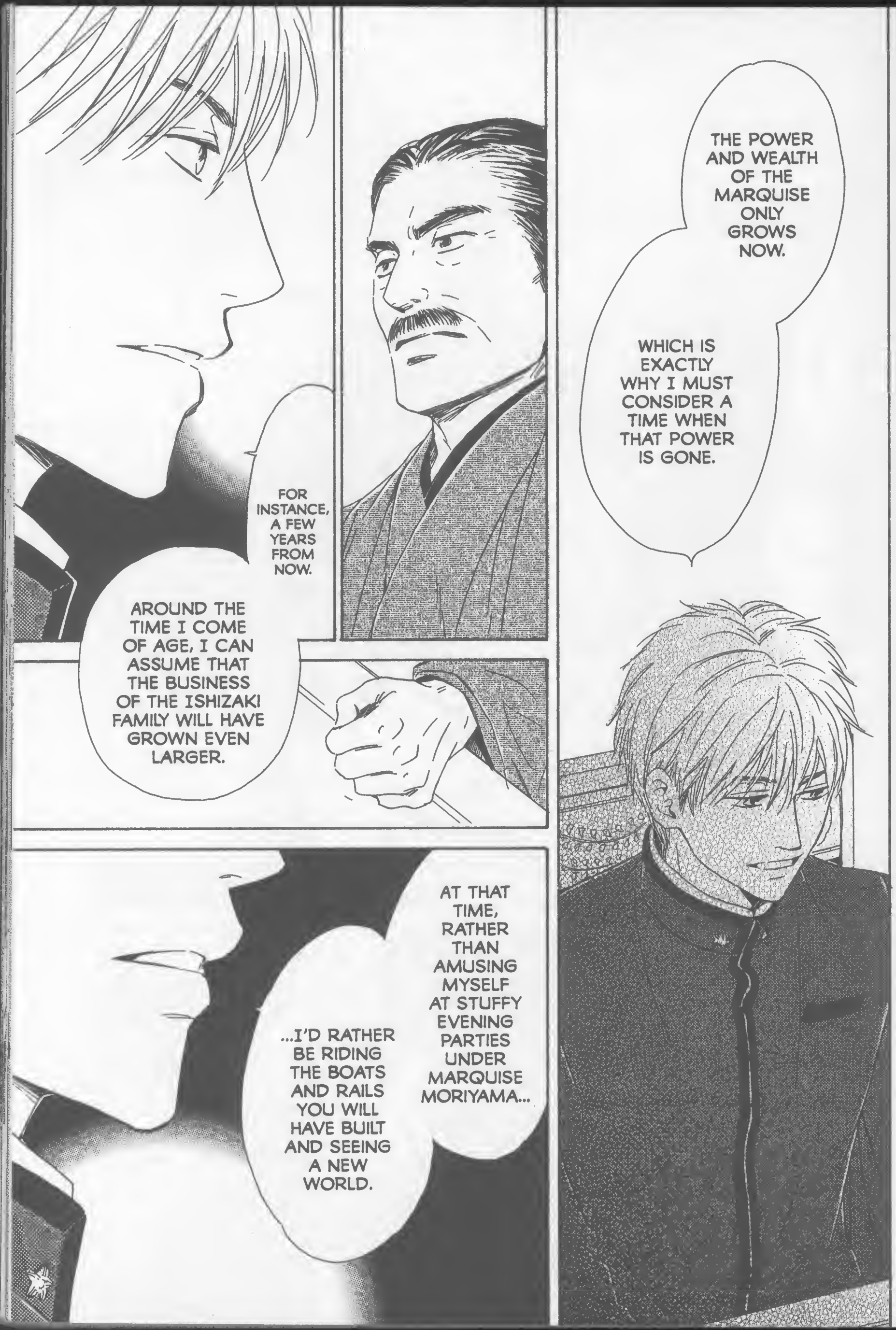

YOU MAY CALL HIM A BUTLER, BUT HE IS NOTHING MORE THAN A SERVANT.
MASTER TOMOYUKI IS NOT A VESSEL TO BE CONTENT WITH SUCH A POSITION.
WHY ON EARTH DID THE OLD LORD NOT TAKE MASTER TOMOYUKI AS HIS ADOPTED SON?
IT'S STRANGE. THAT IS, AFTER ALL, THE REASON HE BROUGHT HIM TO THE HOUSE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
EVEN WITH THE BIRTH OF HIS OWN SON, HE WOULD HAVE NEEDED AN ADOPTED SON IN CASE THE WORST SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED.
AND HE DID RAISE THE BOY AS HIS OWN.
AND THEN, IN THE SPACE OF A DAY, OUR FORMER MASTER TURNED A COLD EYE TOWARDS MASTER TOMOYUKI.
AND NOT THE DAY MASTER AKIHITO WAS BORN.
IT WAS AFTER A SHORT TIME HAD PASSED.

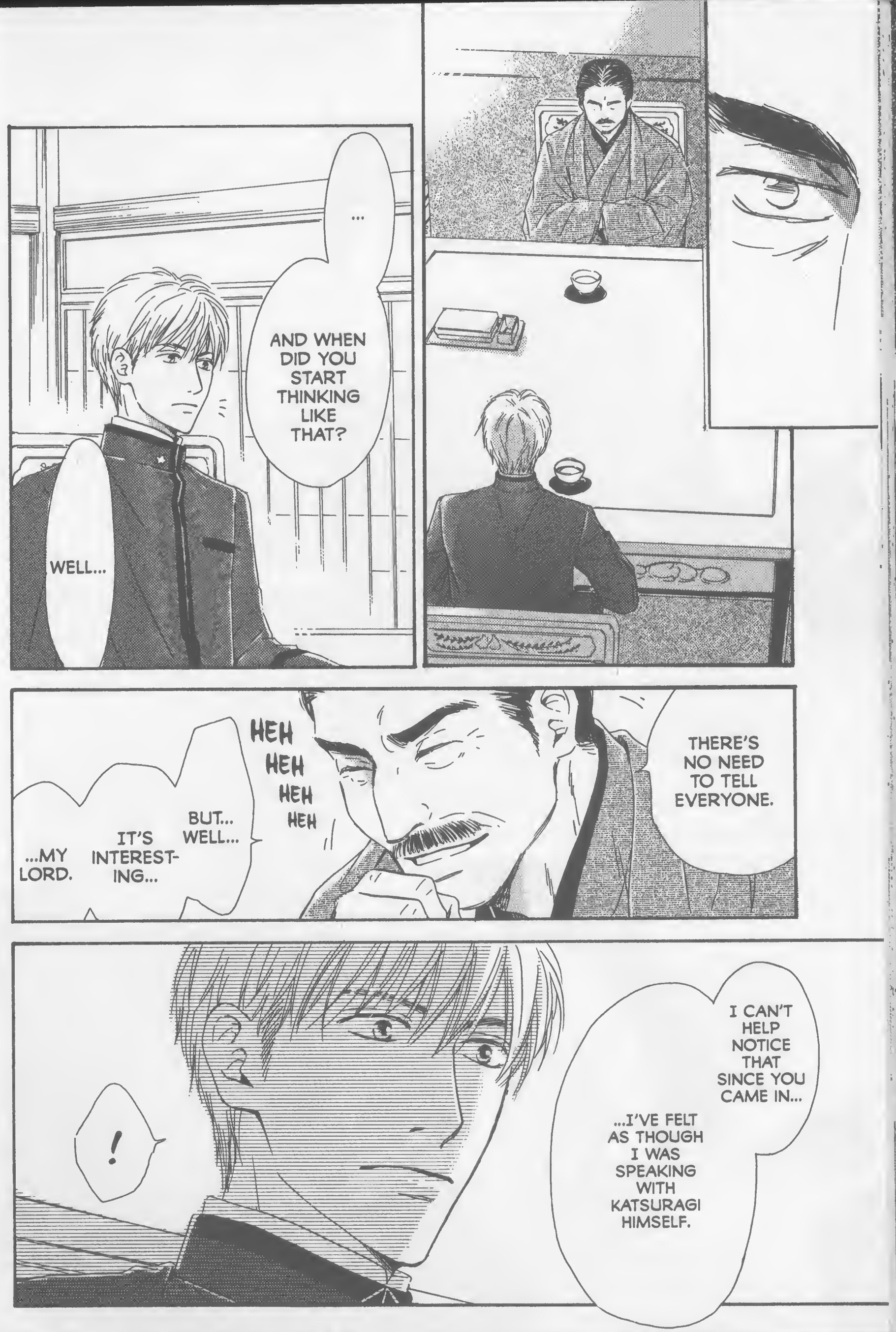

...
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT FOR SOME TIME NOW, YOU SEE.
!
MASTER TOMOYUKI...
PERHAPS HE IS NOT THE SON OF THE MISTRESS OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE?
WHICH IS TO SAY, HE DOES NOT CARRY THE BLOOD OF THE KUZE MAIN HOUSE AT ALL.
THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN AN ENORMOUS PROBLEM FOR OUR LORD.
HE IS, AFTER ALL, THE MAN WHO BROKE OFF TIES WITH HIS OWN ILLEGITIMATE BROTHER AND REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS FORMAL BLOODLINE.
PERHAPS THE CHILD OF A CONCUBINE OF A FAMILY BRANCH!
THAT IS SOMETHING THAT WOULD MAKE HIM CUT TIES WITH THE KATSURAGI FAMILY, ISN'T IT?

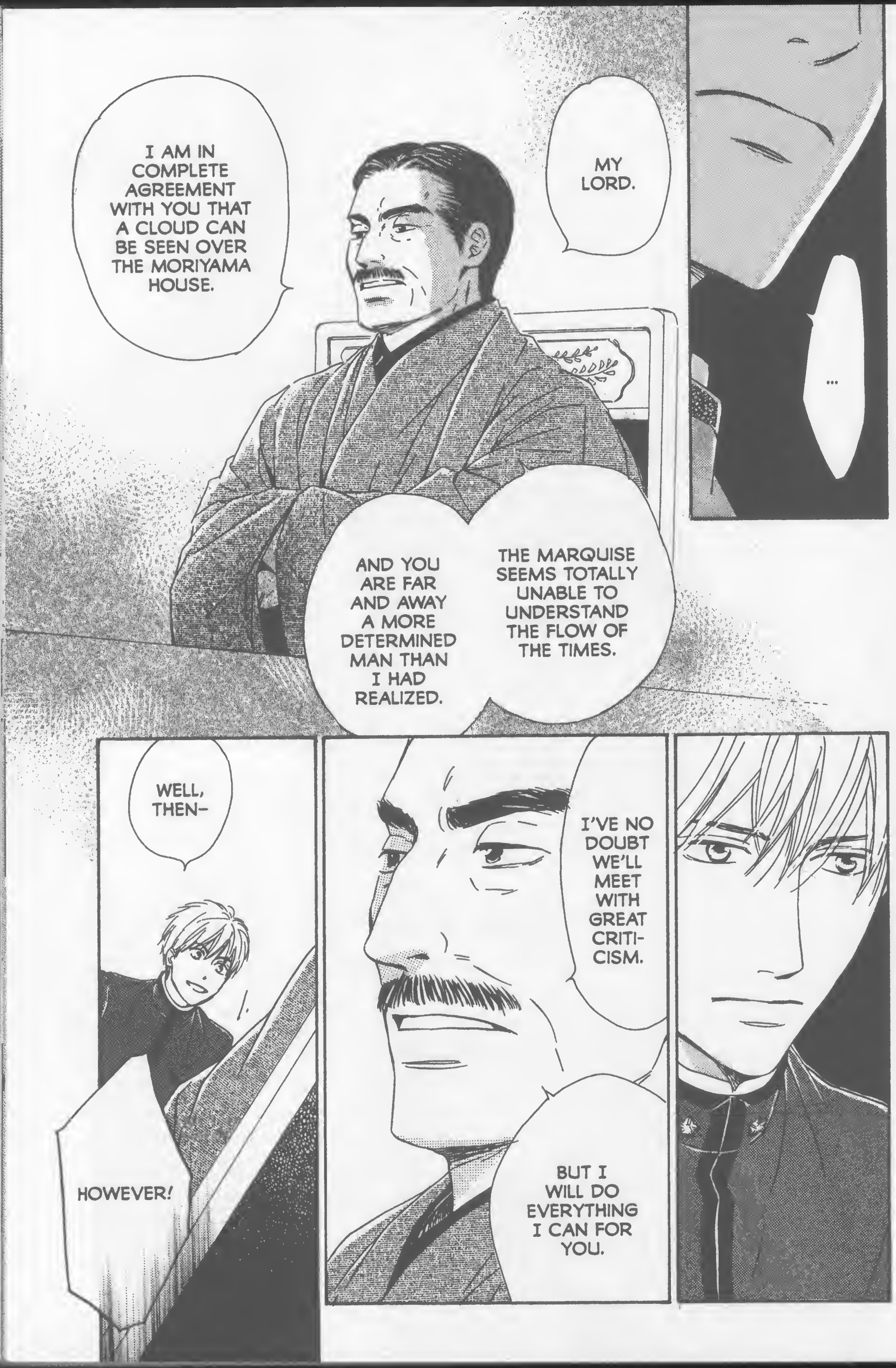

BUT, WELL...
SUPPOSING THIS IS THE CASE, THERE'S SOMETHING I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND.
TAKAMASA KATSURAGI. WHY WOULD THE FORMER HEAD OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE SEND MASTER TOMOYUKI TO THE KUZE HOUSE?
HE HAS OTHER SONS.
NOT AS ATTRACTIVE, BUT STILL.
NOT THAT LOOKS MATTER AS THE SECOND SON.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO CONFESS EVERYTHING TO OUR LORD THE MOMENT HE REACHED OUT TO HIM.
TAKAMASA KATSURAGI SERVED HIS FEUDAL LORD KUZE AS AN ALMOST TOO FAITHFUL VASSAL.
WOULD A MAN LIKE THAT DO ANYTHING TO BETRAY HIS MASTER?

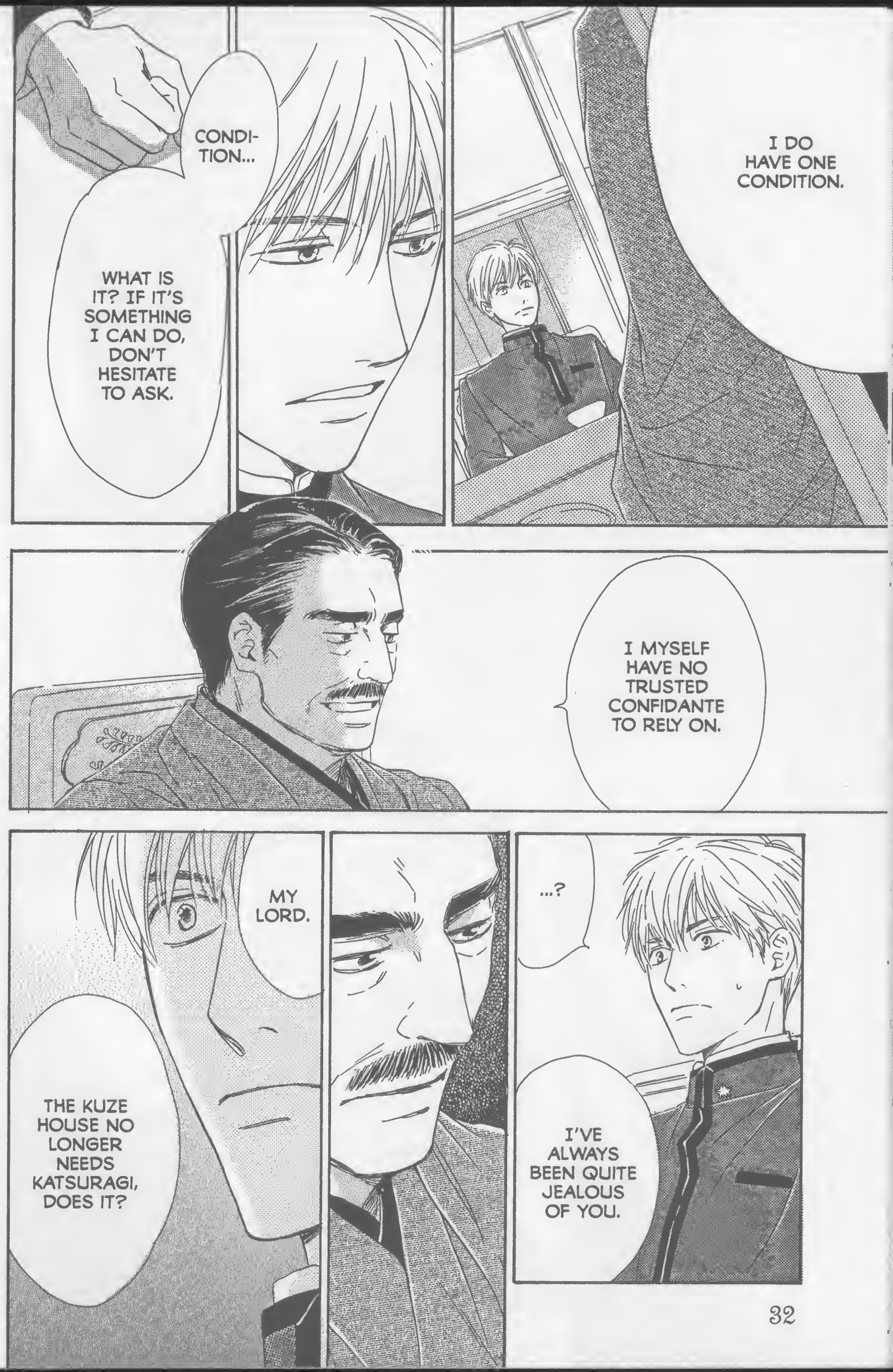

KIKU.
I AM NOT AN IDIOT.
WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU HIDING?
MY LORD.

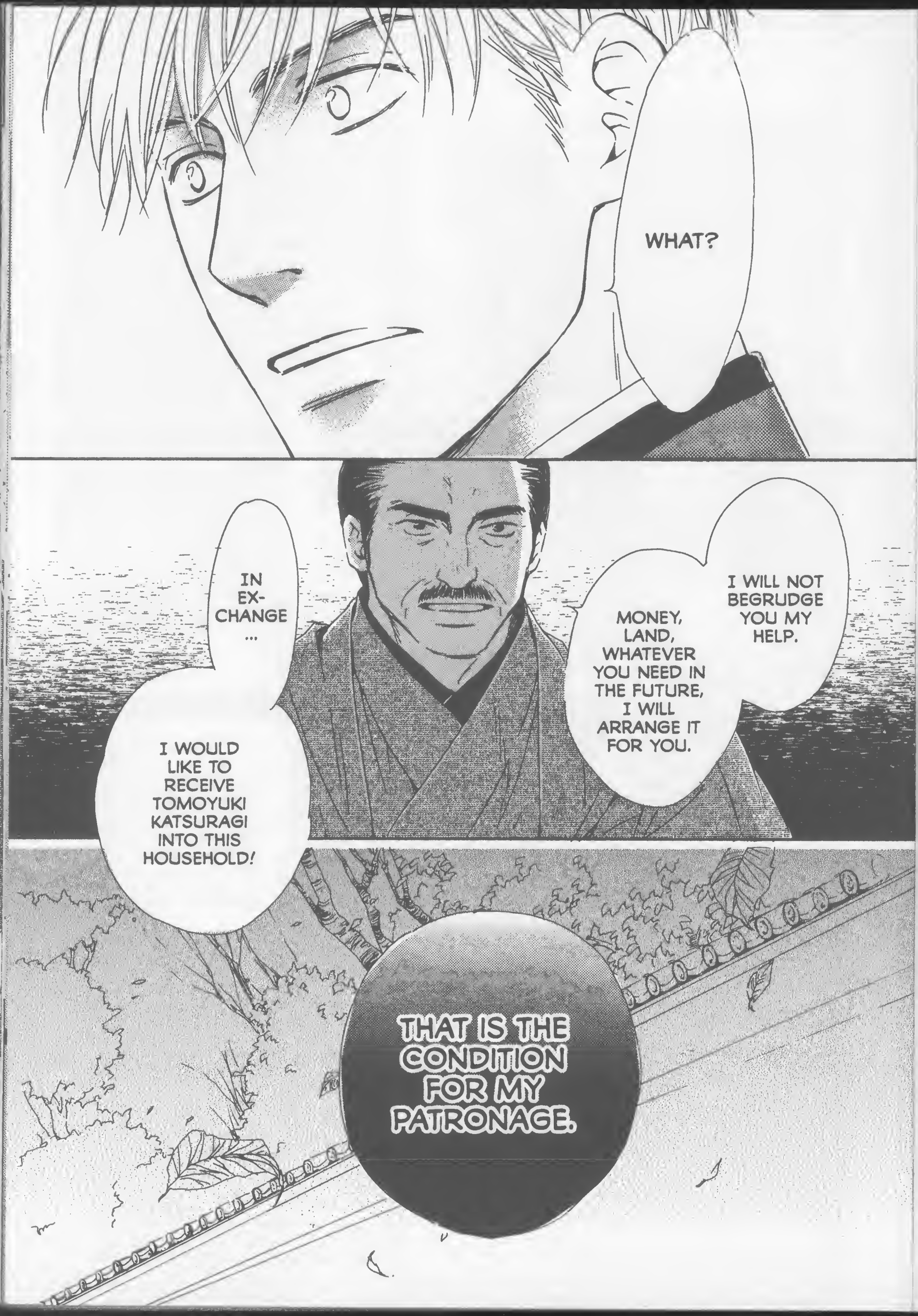

ME AS YOUR GO-BETWEEN?
DO YOU UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?
RIGHT NOW, HIS EXCELLENCY MARQUISE MORIYAMA IS A MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSONAGE.
THAT THE AUTHORITY OF YOUR HOUSE IS FELT AS IT IS NOW IS PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE PATRONAGE OF MARQUISE MORIYAMA!
ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU WISH TO PUT ASIDE THIS MAN AND ENTRUST A LOWLY MERCHANT WITH SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE?
I AM.

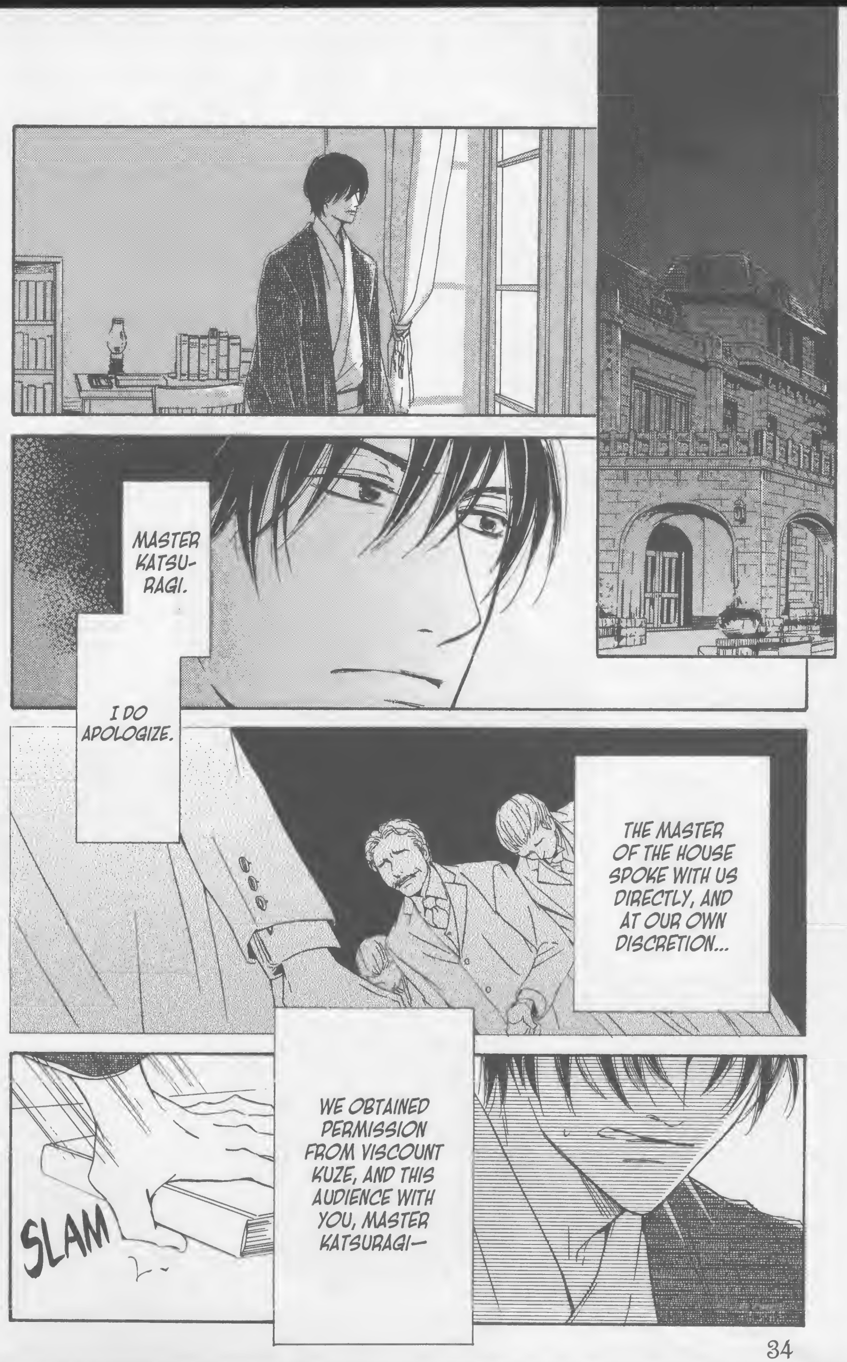

THE POWER AND WEALTH OF THE MARQUISE ONLY GROWS NOW.
WHICH IS EXACTLY WHY I MUST CONSIDER A TIME WHEN THAT POWER IS GONE.
FOR INSTANCE, A FEW YEARS FROM NOW.
AROUND THE TIME I COME OF AGE, I CAN ASSUME THAT THE BUSINESS OF THE ISHIZAKI FAMILY WILL HAVE GROWN EVEN LARGER.
AT THAT TIME, RATHER THAN AMUSING MYSELF AT STUFFY EVENING PARTIES UNDER MARQUISE MORIYAMA...
...I'D RATHER BE RIDING THE BOATS AND RAILS YOU WILL HAVE BUILT AND SEEING A NEW WORLD.

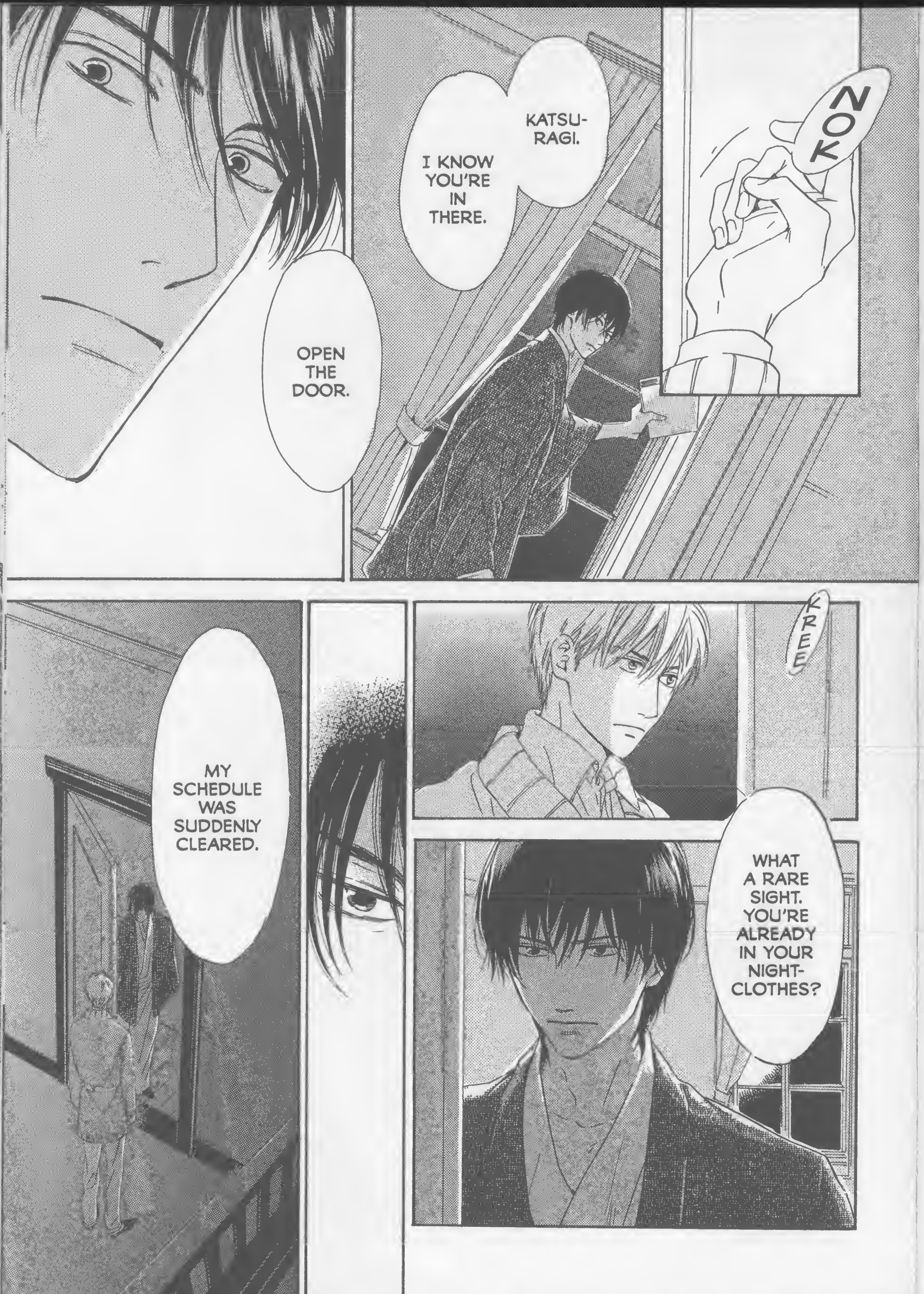

...
AND WHEN DID YOU START THINKING LIKE THAT?
WELL...
THERE'S NO NEED TO TELL EVERYONE.
HEH HEH HEH HEH
BUT... WELL...
IT'S INTERESTING...
...MY LORD.
I CAN'T HELP NOTICE THAT SINCE YOU CAME IN...
...I'VE FELT AS THOUGH I WAS SPEAKING WITH KATSURAGI HIMSELF.
!

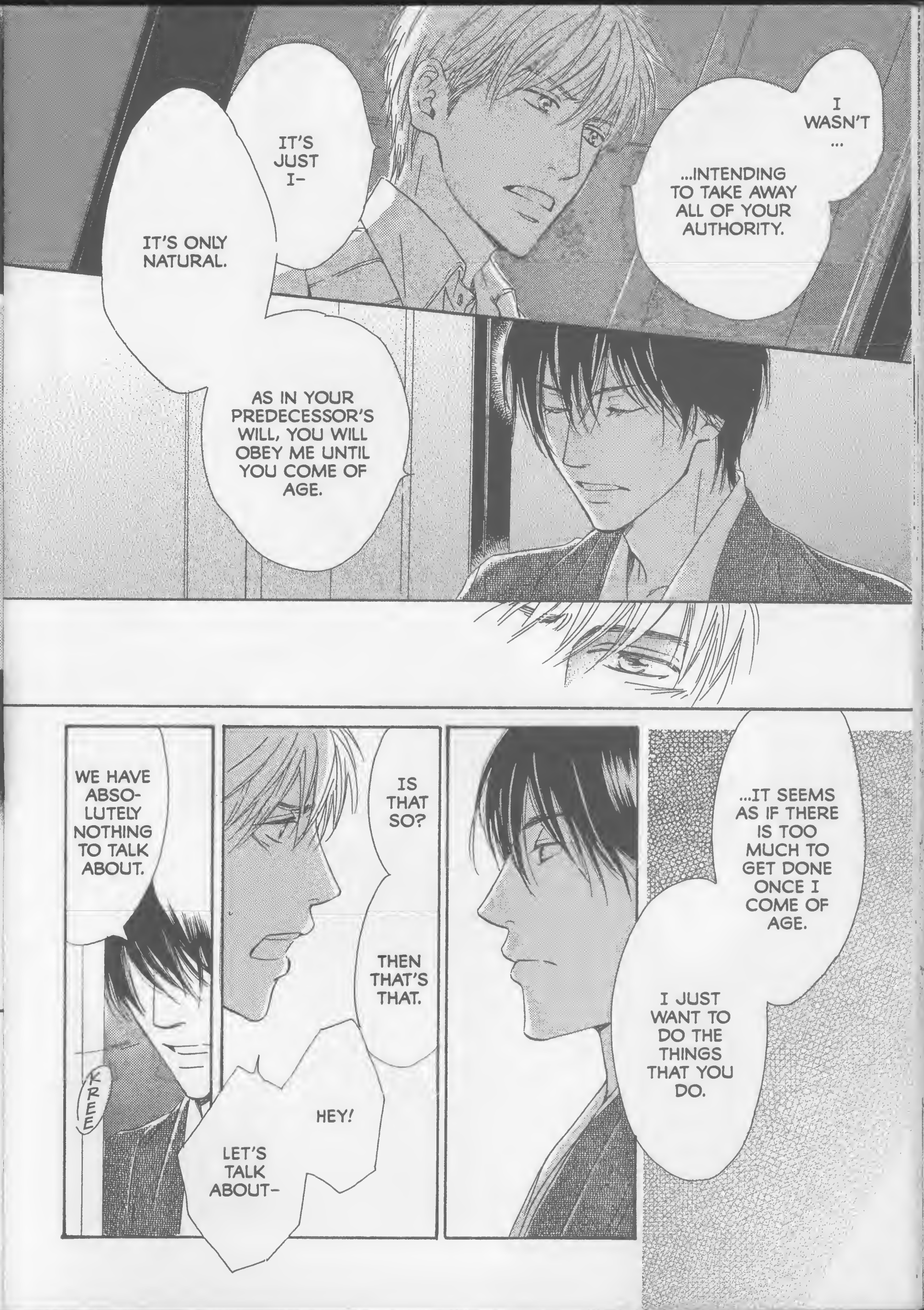

MY LORD.
...
I AM IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT WITH YOU THAT A CLOUD CAN BE SEEN OVER THE MORIYAMA HOUSE.
THE MARQUISE SEEMS TOTALLY UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE FLOW OF THE TIMES.
AND YOU ARE FAR AND AWAY A MORE DETERMINED MAN THAN I HAD REALIZED.
I'VE NO DOUBT WE'LL MEET WITH GREAT CRITICISM.
BUT I WILL DO EVERYTHING I CAN FOR YOU.
WELL, THEN-
HOWEVER!

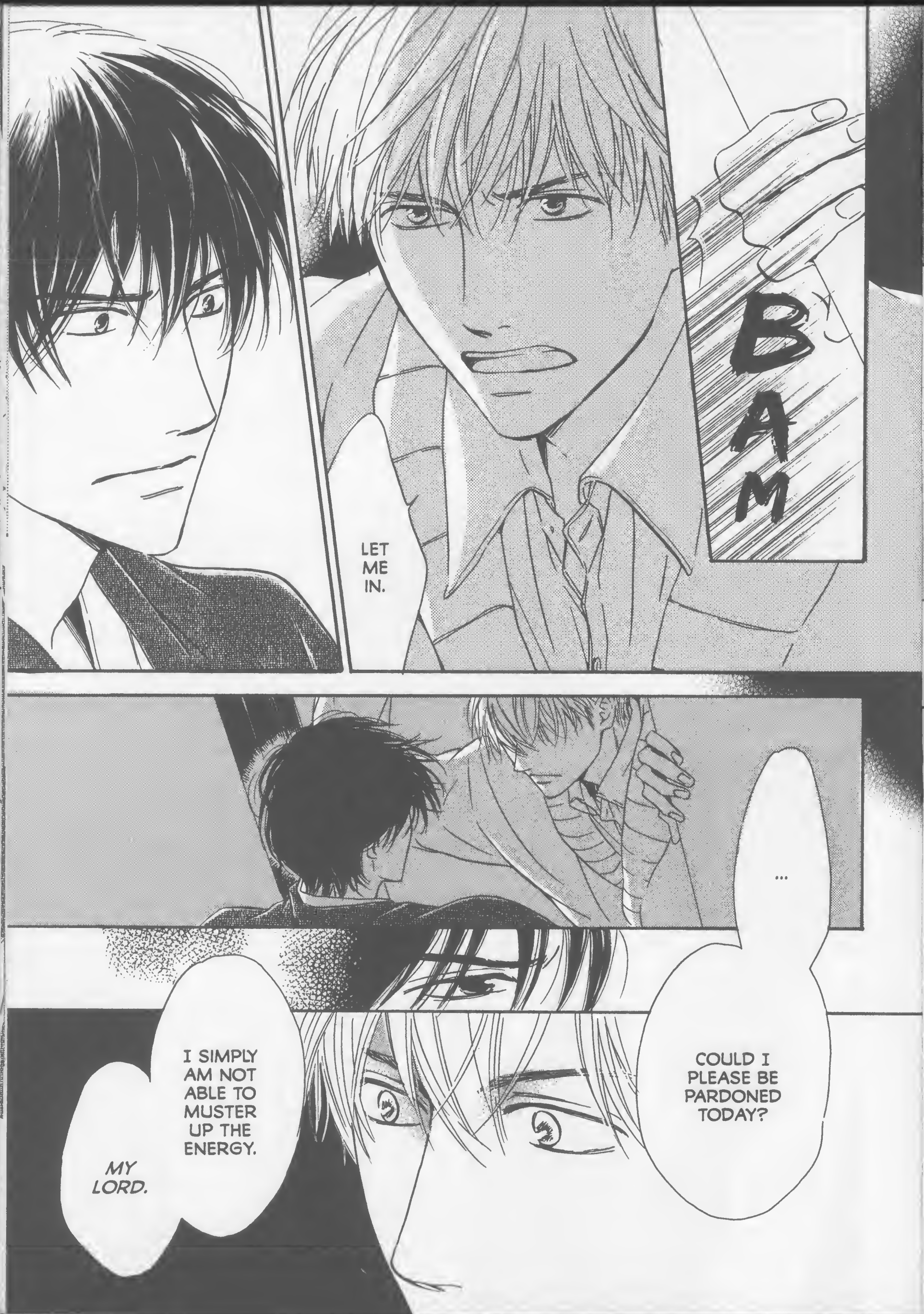

I DO HAVE ONE CONDITION.
CONDITION...
WHAT IS IT? IF IT'S SOMETHING I CAN DO, DON'T HESITATE TO ASK.
I MYSELF HAVE NO TRUSTED CONFIDANTE TO RELY ON.
...?
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN QUITE JEALOUS OF YOU.
MY LORD.
THE KUZE HOUSE NO LONGER NEEDS KATSURAGI, DOES IT?

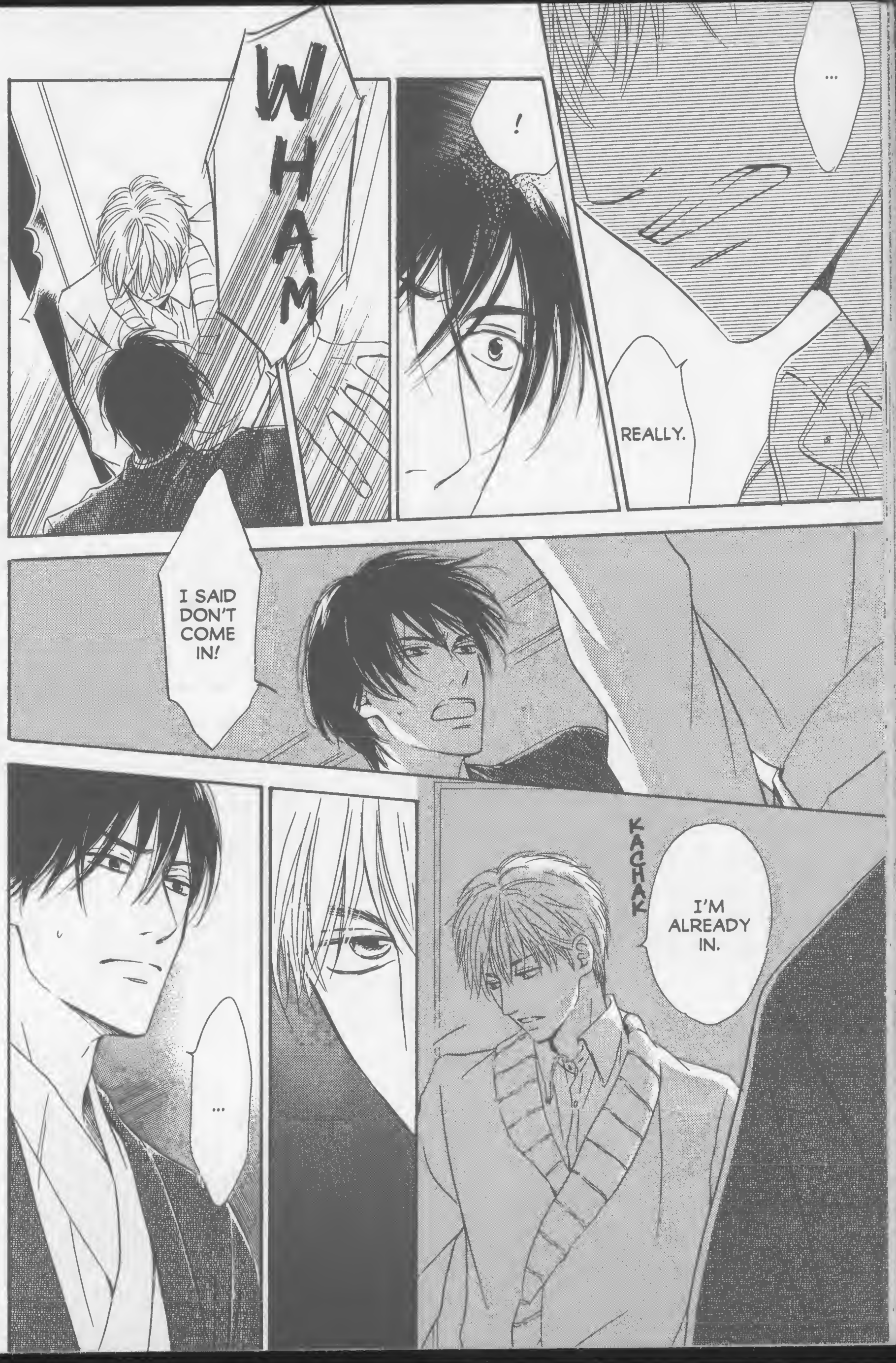

WHAT?
I WILL NOT BEGRUDGE YOU MY HELP.
MONEY, LAND, WHATEVER YOU NEED IN THE FUTURE, I WILL ARRANGE IT FOR YOU.
IN EXCHANGE...
I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI INTO THIS HOUSEHOLD!
THAT IS THE CONDITION FOR MY PATRONAGE.

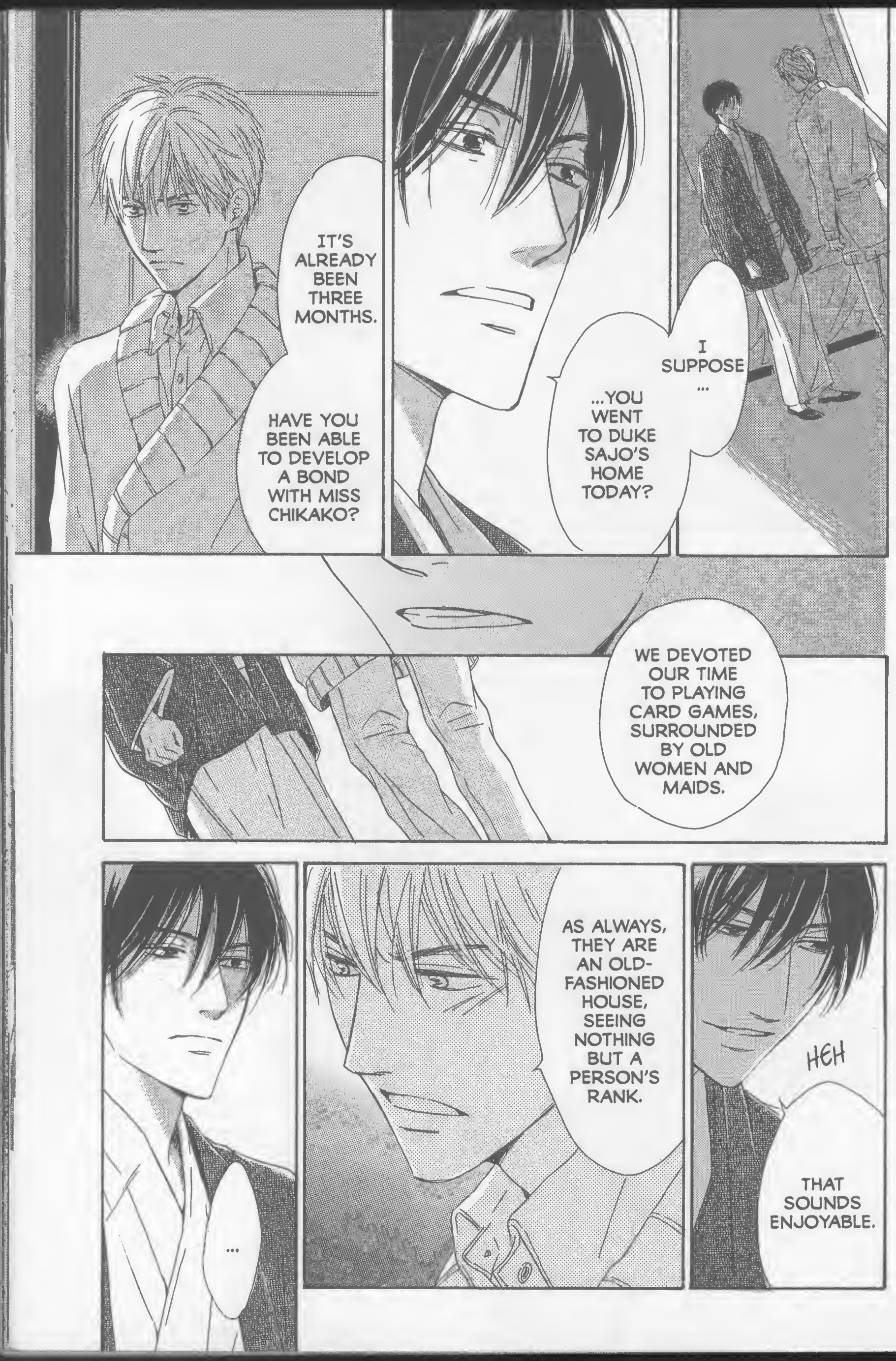

MASTER KATSURAGI.
I DO APOLOGIZE.
THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE SPOKE WITH US DIRECTLY, AND AT OUR OWN DISCRETION...
WE OBTAINED PERMISSION FROM VISCOUNT KUZE, AND THIS AUDIENCE WITH YOU, MASTER KATSURAGI—
SLAM

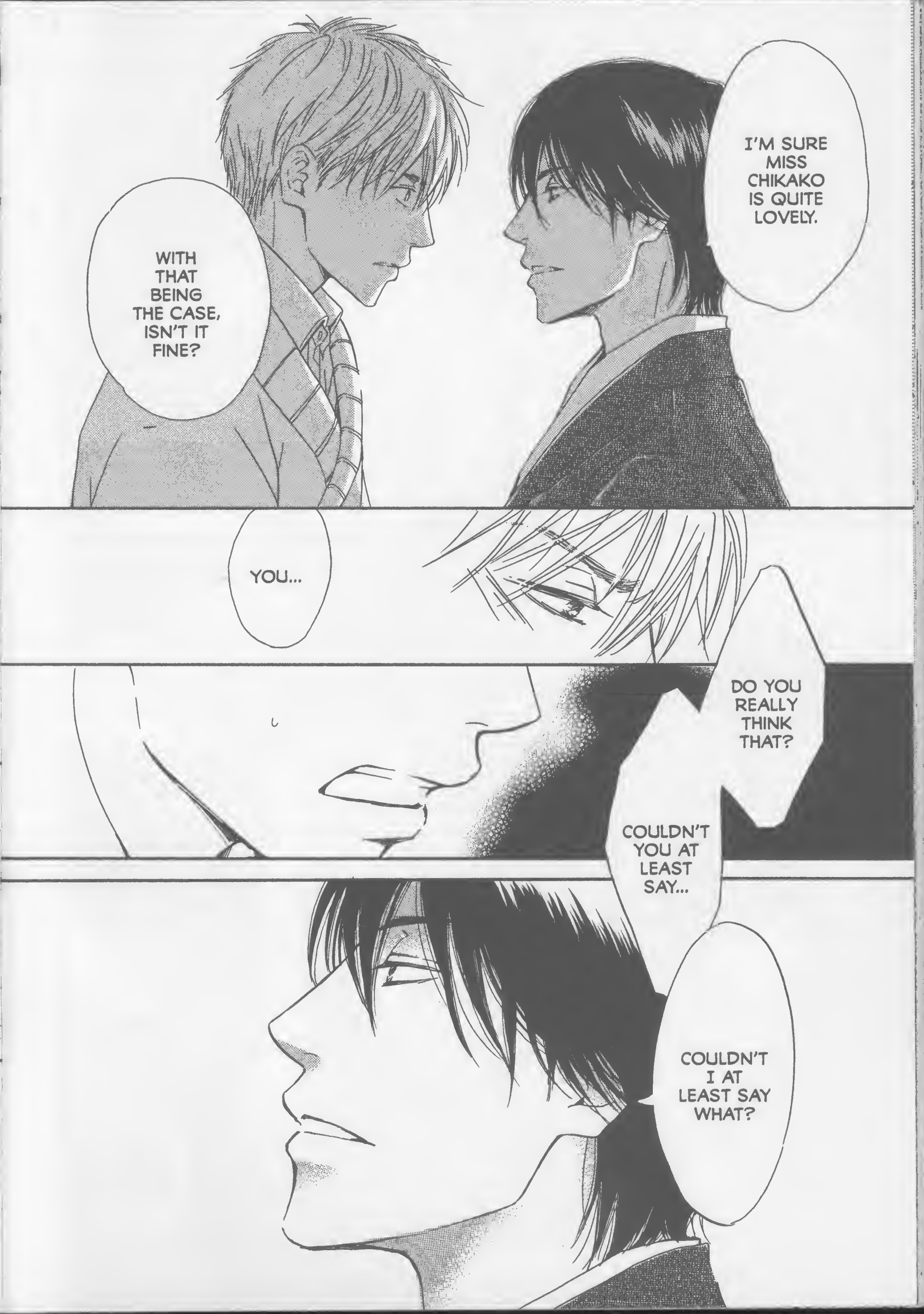

NOK
KATSURAGI.
I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE.
OPEN THE DOOR.
KREE
WHAT A RARE SIGHT. YOU'RE ALREADY IN YOUR NIGHTCLOTHES?
MY SCHEDULE WAS SUDDENLY CLEARED.

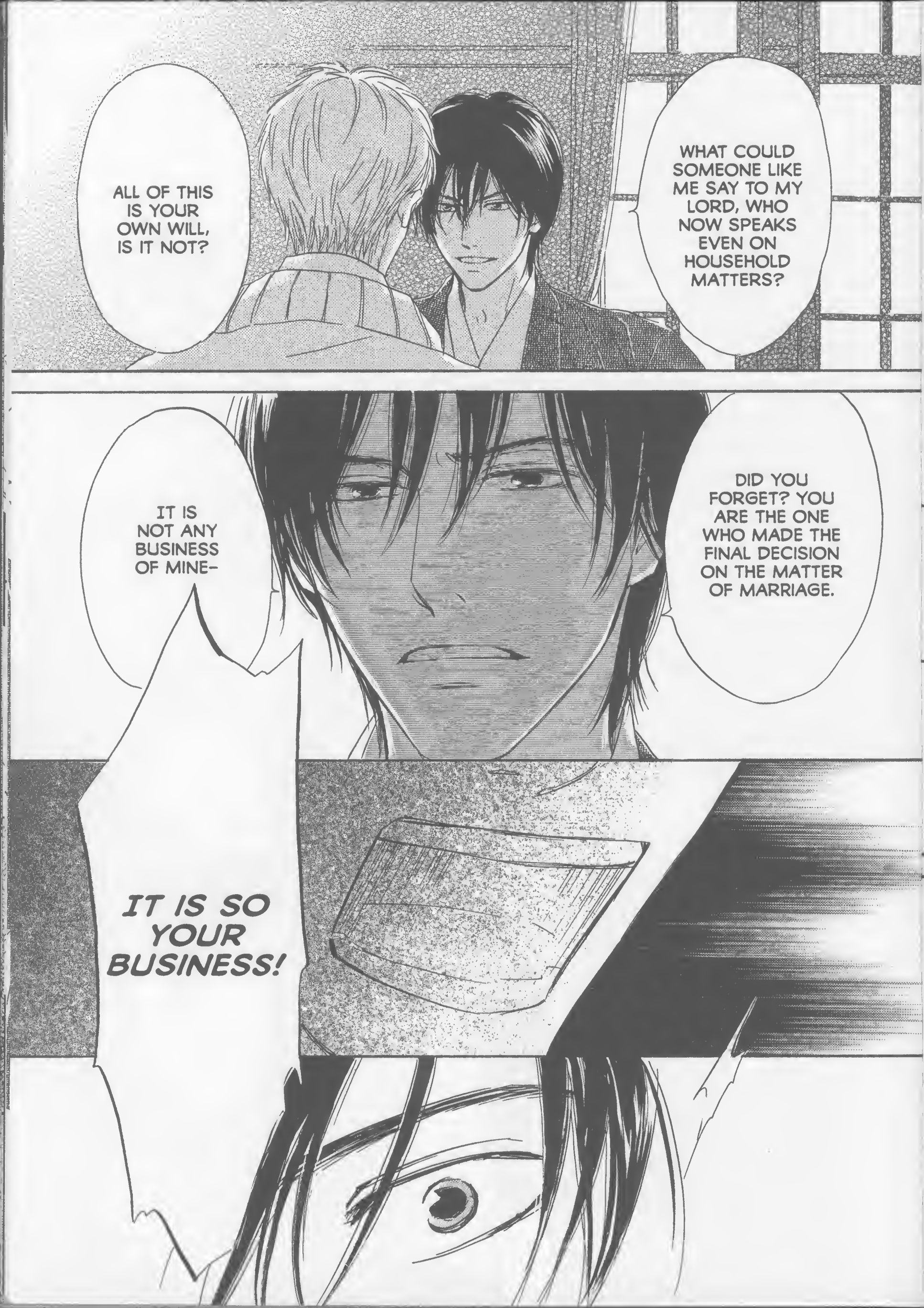

I WASN'T ...
...INTENDING TO TAKE AWAY ALL OF YOUR AUTHORITY.
IT'S JUST I–
IT'S ONLY NATURAL.
AS IN YOUR PREDECESSOR'S WILL, YOU WILL OBEY ME UNTIL YOU COME OF AGE.
...IT SEEMS AS IF THERE IS TOO MUCH TO GET DONE ONCE I COME OF AGE.
I JUST WANT TO DO THE THINGS THAT YOU DO.
IS THAT SO?
THEN THAT'S THAT.
HEY!
LET'S TALK ABOUT–
WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT.
KREE

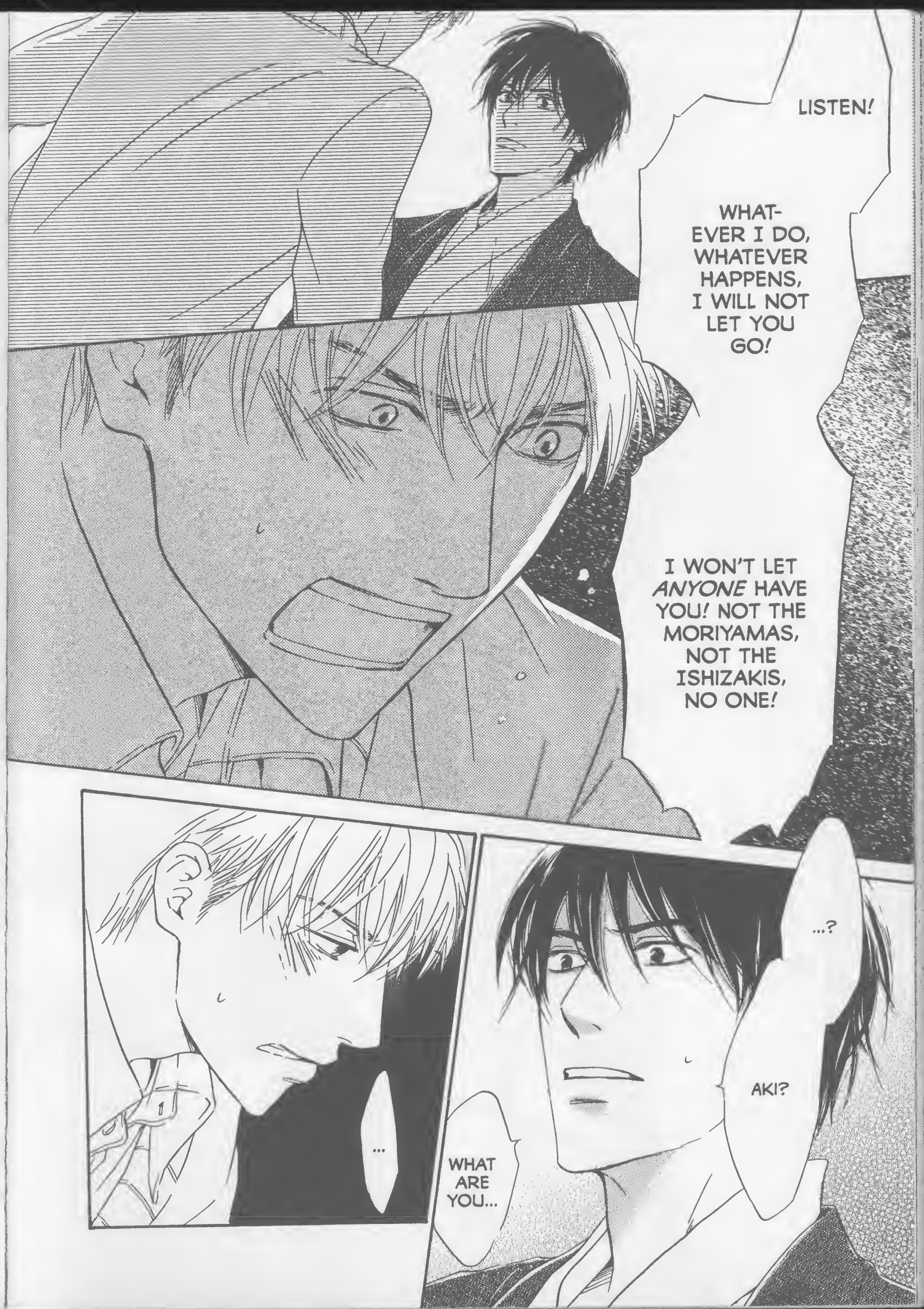

BAM
LET ME IN.
...
COULD I PLEASE BE PARDONED TODAY?
I SIMPLY AM NOT ABLE TO MUSTER UP THE ENERGY.
MY LORD.

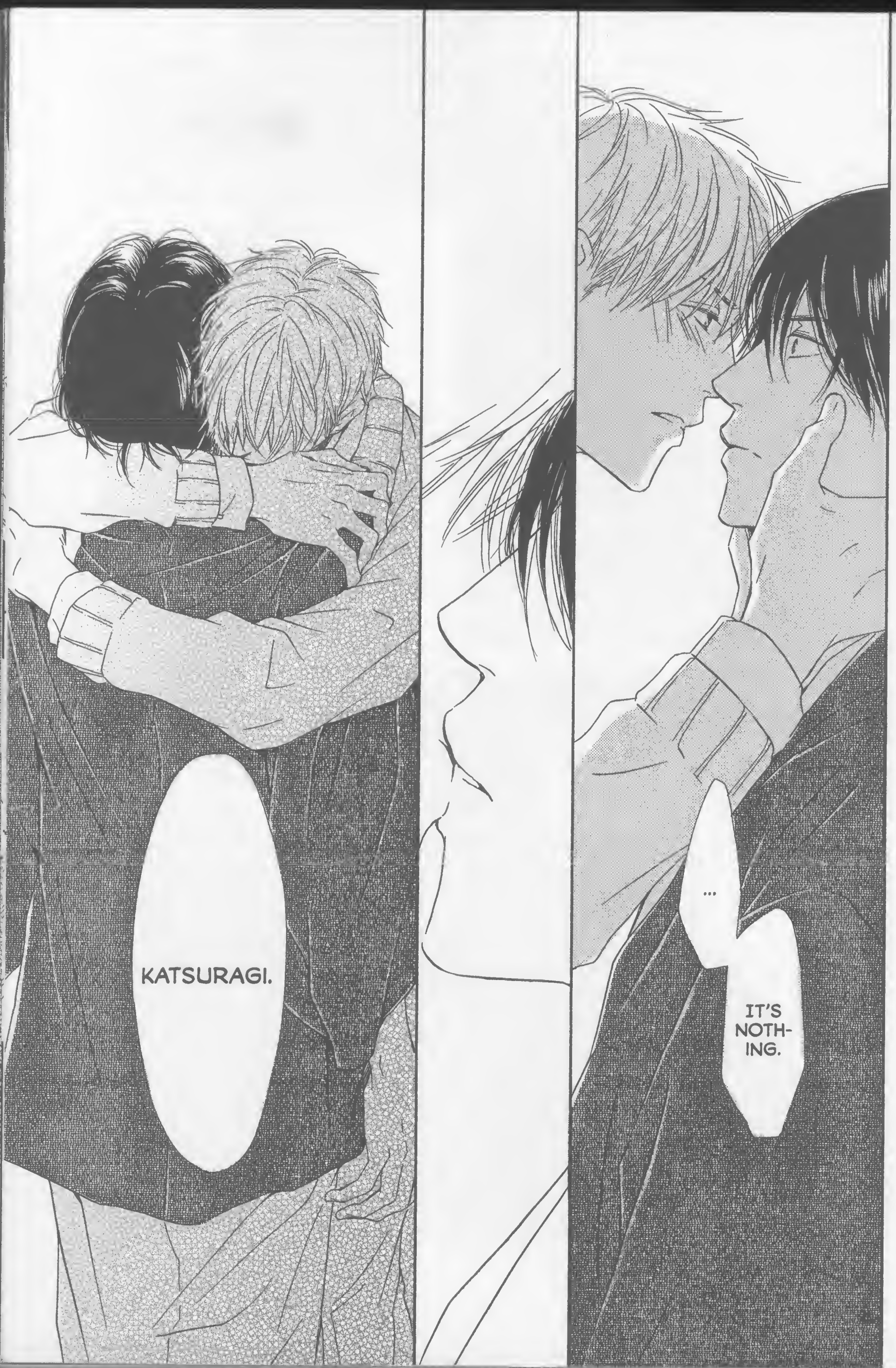

...
!
REALLY.
WHAM
I SAID DON'T COME IN!
KACHAK
I'M ALREADY IN.
...

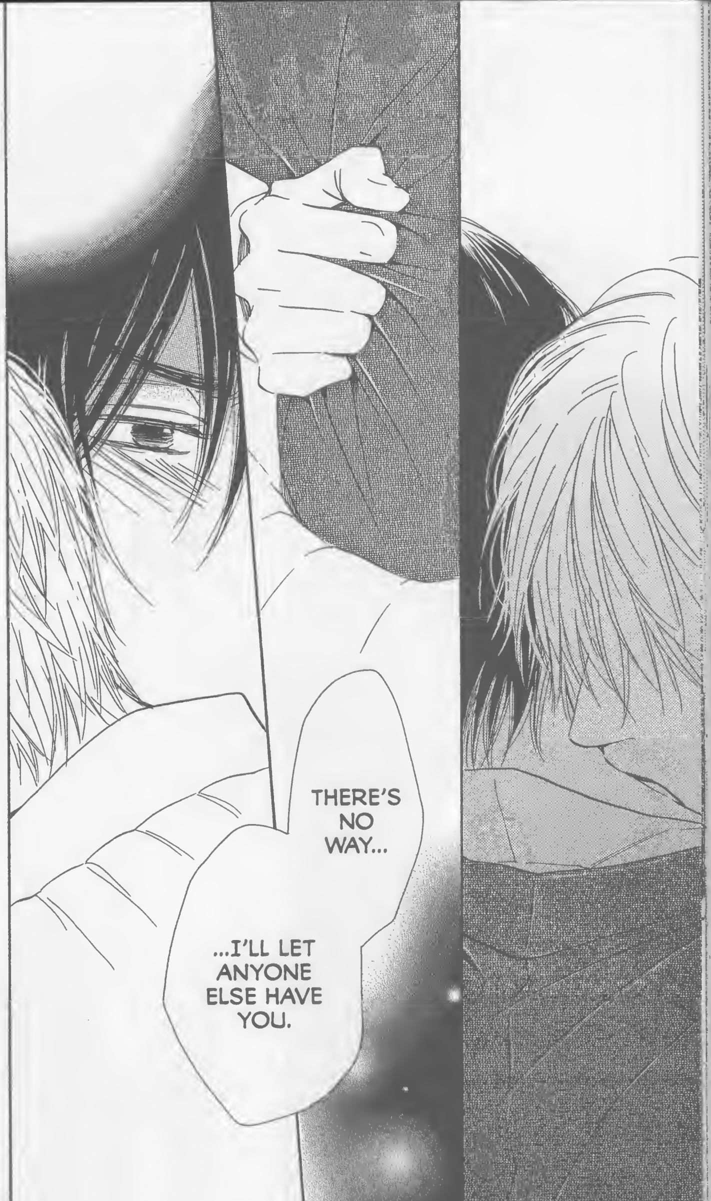

I SUPPOSE ...
...YOU WENT TO DUKE SAJO'S HOME TODAY?
IT'S ALREADY BEEN THREE MONTHS.
HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP A BOND WITH MISS CHIKAKO?
WE DEVOTED OUR TIME TO PLAYING CARD GAMES, SURROUNDED BY OLD WOMEN AND MAIDS.
HEH
THAT SOUNDS ENJOYABLE.
AS ALWAYS, THEY ARE AN OLD-FASHIONED HOUSE, SEEING NOTHING BUT A PERSON'S RANK.
...

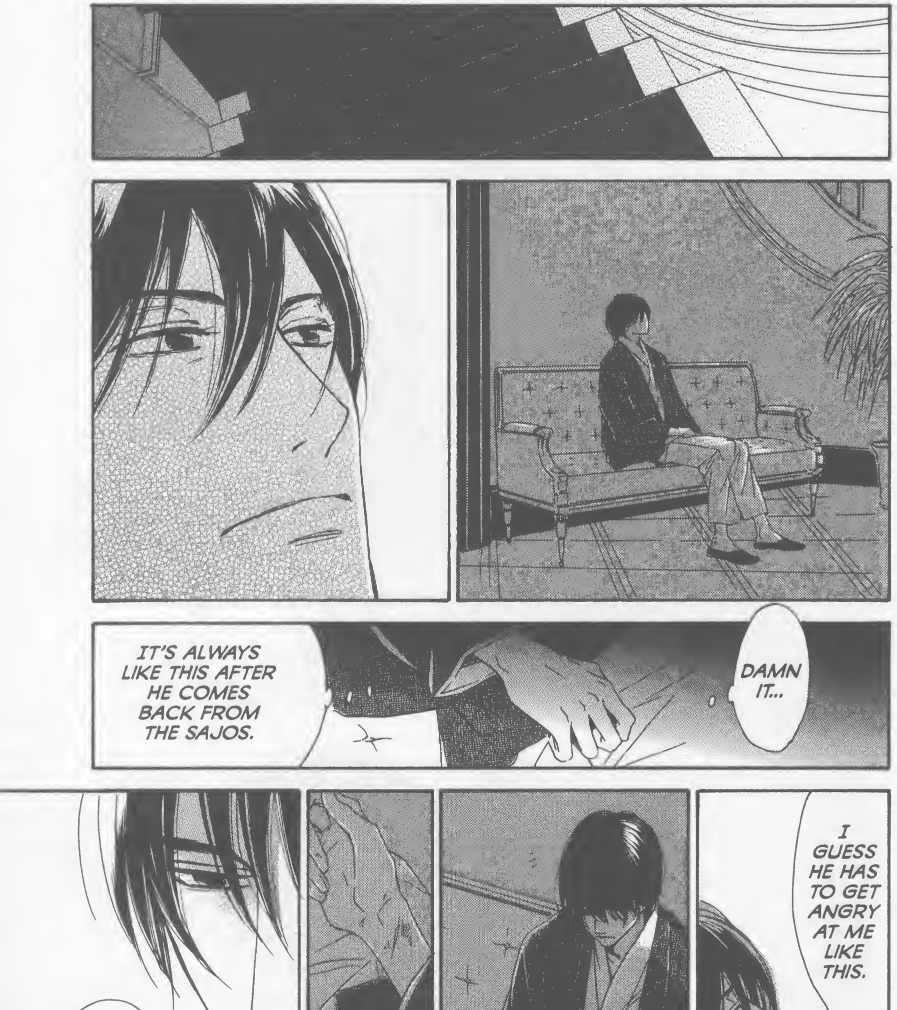

I'M SURE MISS CHIKAKO IS QUITE LOVELY.
WITH THAT BEING THE CASE, ISN'T IT FINE?
YOU...
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT?
COULDN'T YOU AT LEAST SAY...
COULDN'T I AT LEAST SAY WHAT?

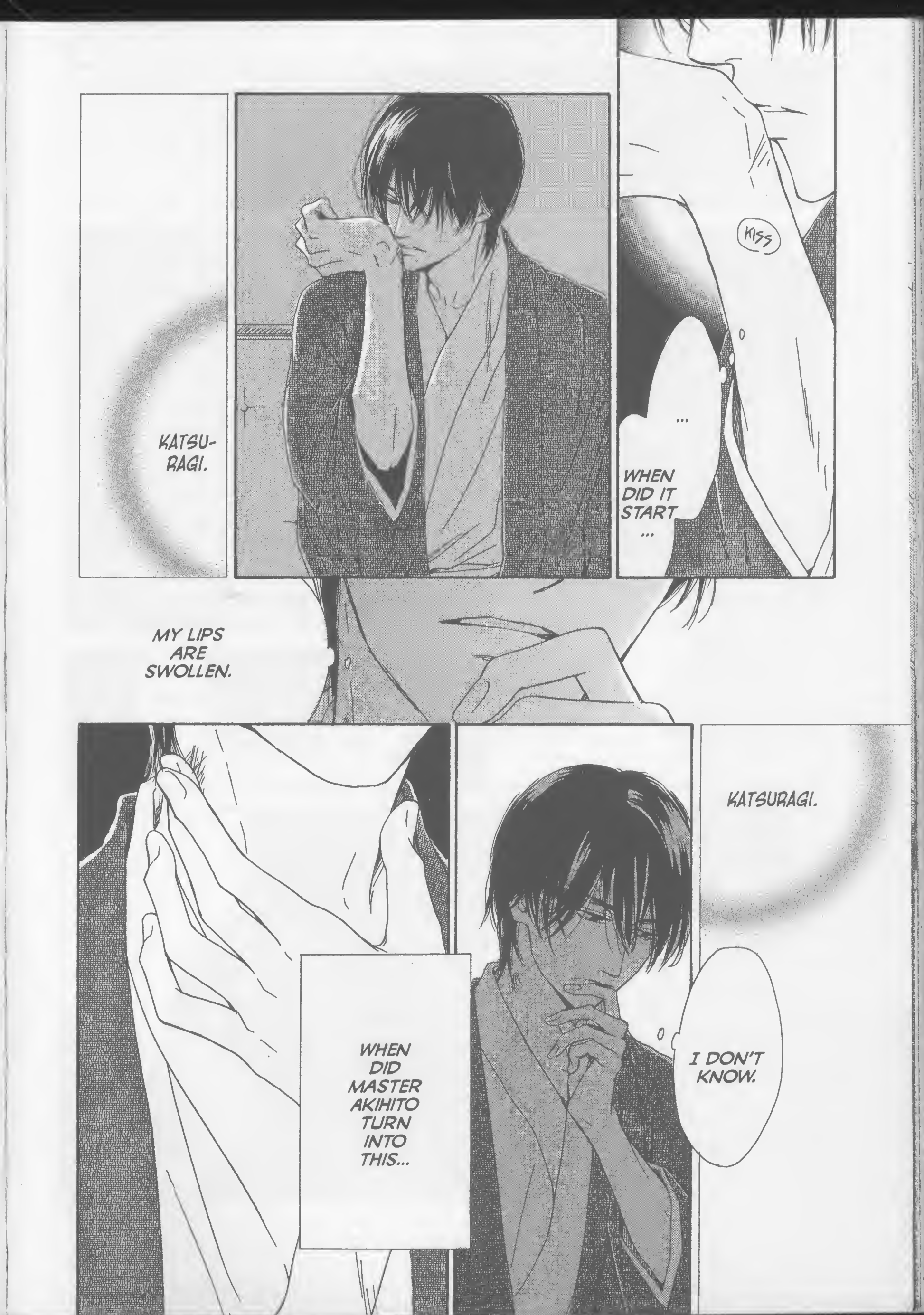

WHAT COULD SOMEONE LIKE ME SAY TO MY LORD, WHO NOW SPEAKS EVEN ON HOUSEHOLD MATTERS?
ALL OF THIS IS YOUR OWN WILL, IS IT NOT?
DID YOU FORGET? YOU ARE THE ONE WHO MADE THE FINAL DECISION ON THE MATTER OF MARRIAGE.
IT IS NOT ANY BUSINESS OF MINE–
IT IS SO YOUR BUSINESS!

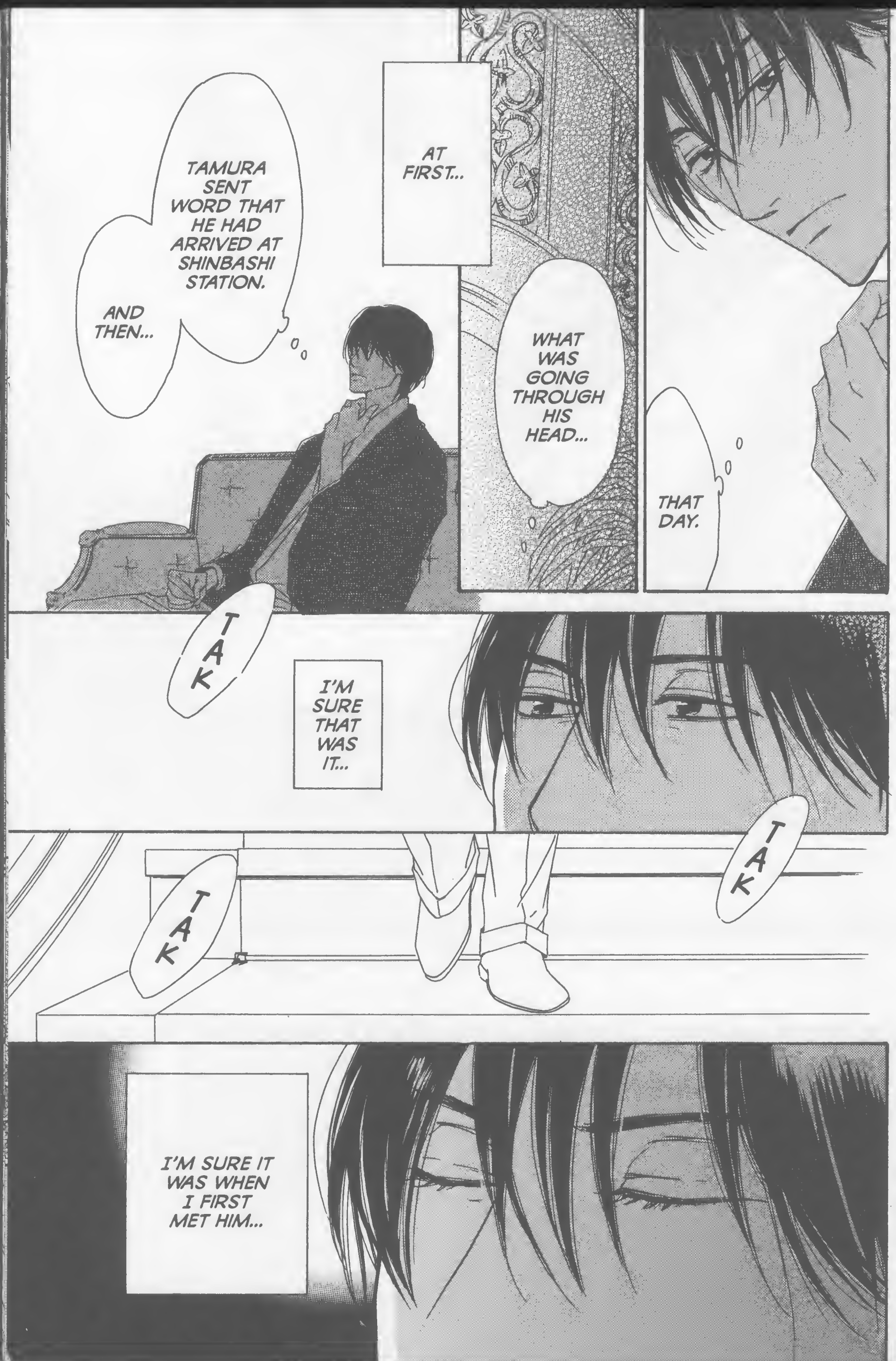

LISTEN!
WHATEVER I DO, WHATEVER HAPPENS, I WILL NOT LET YOU GO!
I WON'T LET *ANYONE* HAVE YOU! NOT THE MORIYAMAS, NOT THE ISHIZAKIS, NO ONE!
...?
AKI?
WHAT ARE YOU...
...

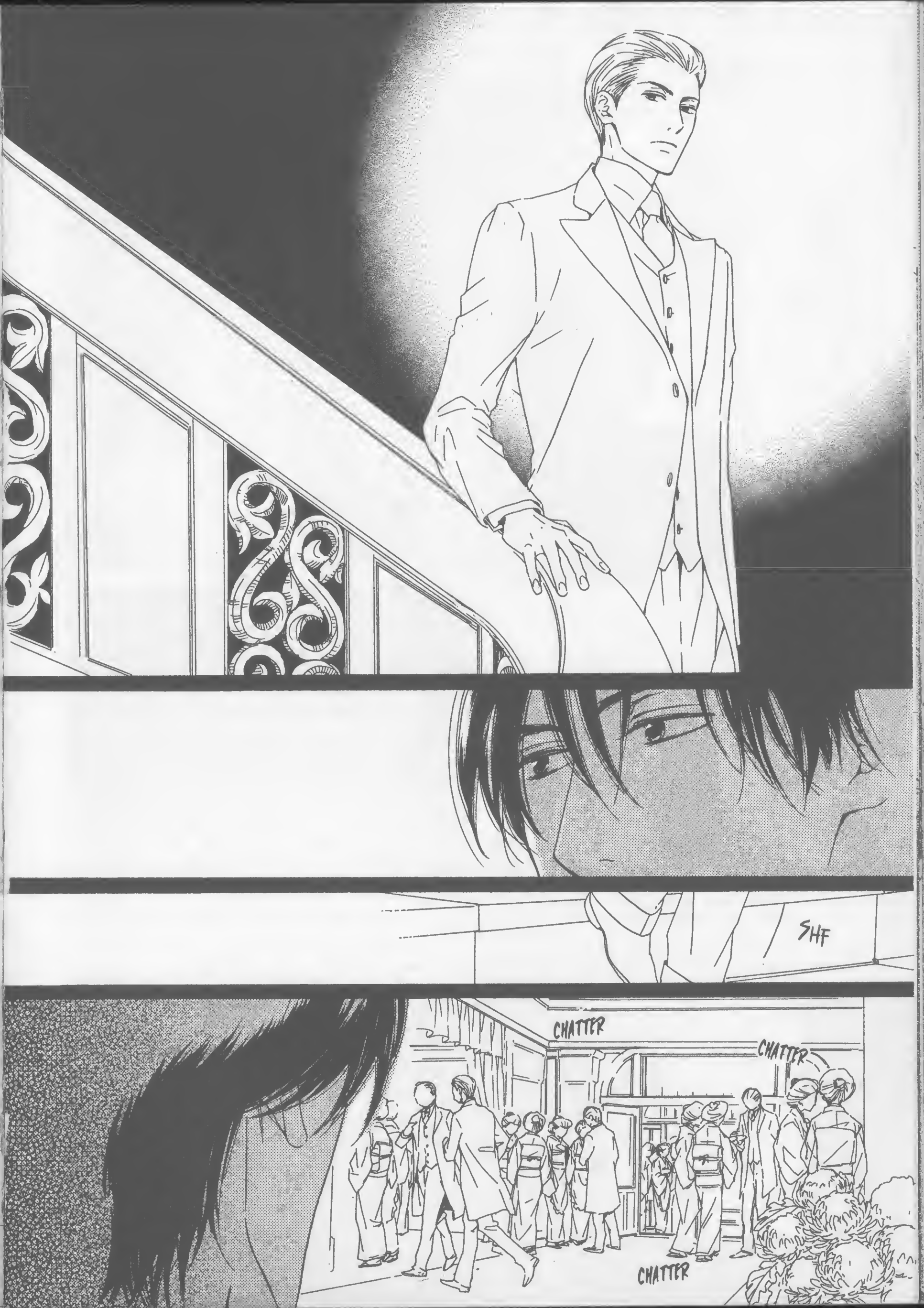

...
IT'S NOTHING.
KATSURAGI.

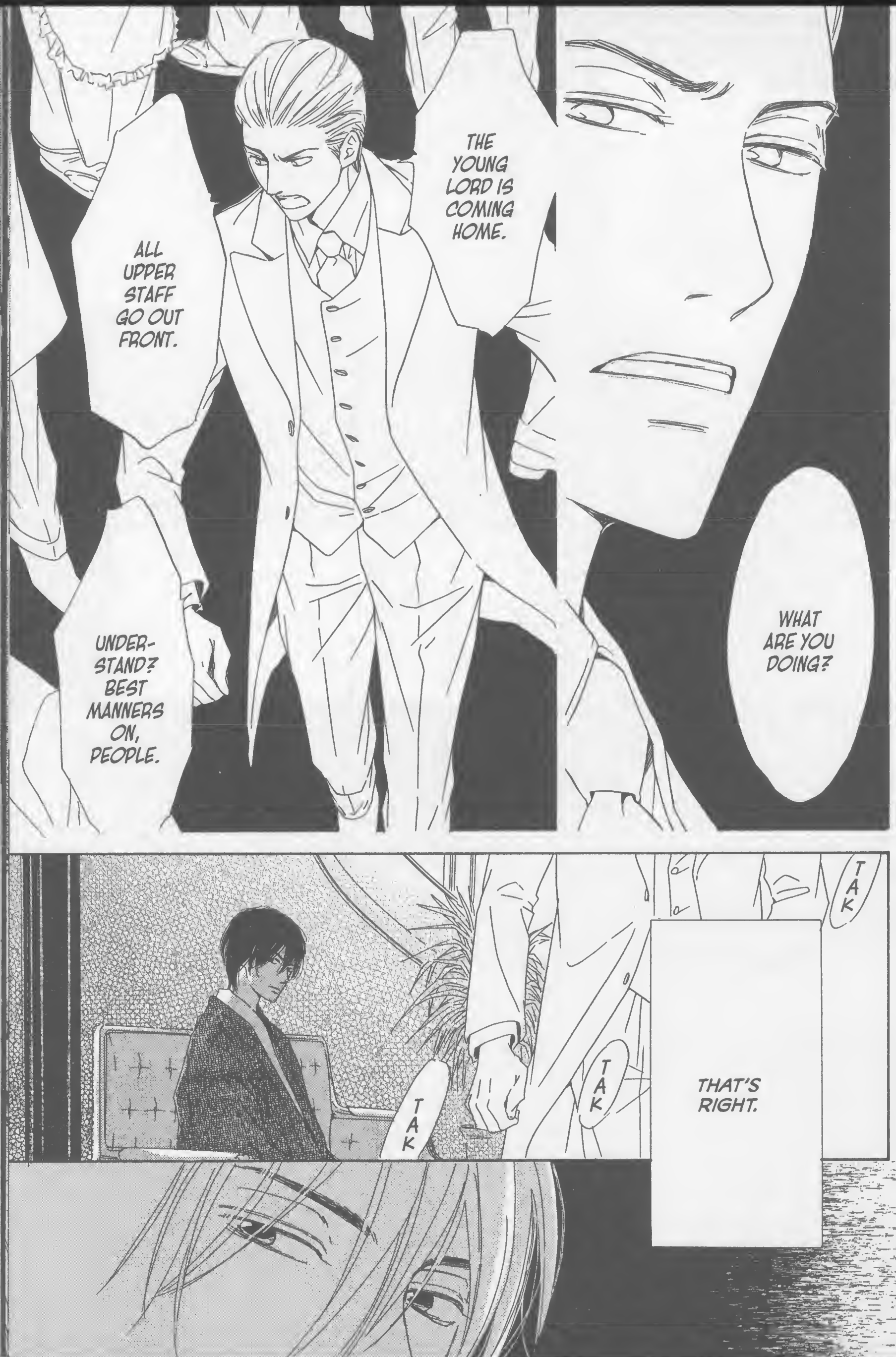

THERE'S NO WAY...
...I'LL LET ANYONE ELSE HAVE YOU.

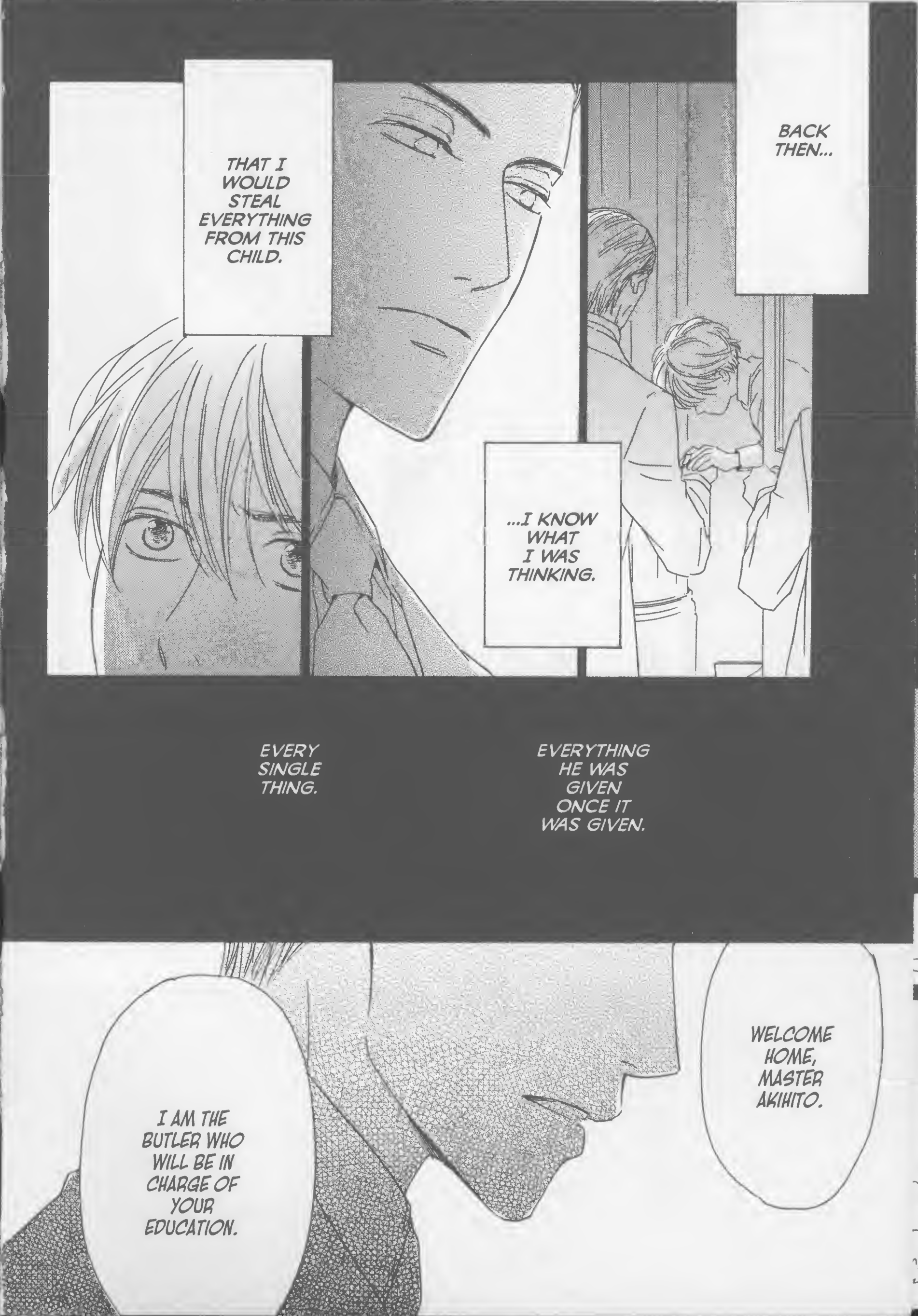

DAMN IT...
IT'S ALWAYS LIKE THIS AFTER HE COMES BACK FROM THE SAJOS.
I GUESS HE HAS TO GET ANGRY AT ME LIKE THIS.
HE ALWAYS LEAVES BRUISES ON MY WRISTS.

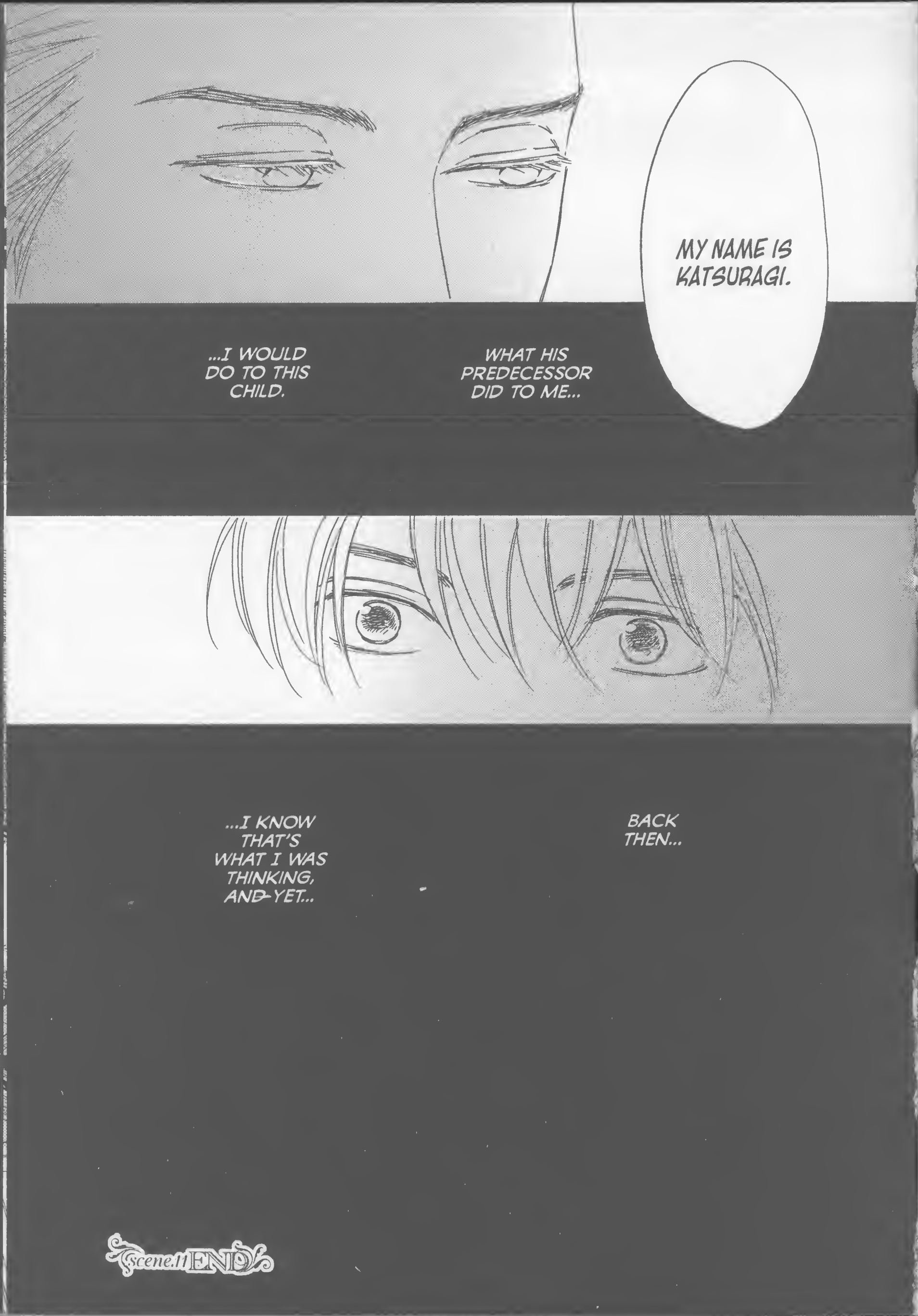

KISS
...
WHEN DID IT START...
KATSURAGI.
MY LIPS ARE SWOLLEN.
KATSURAGI.
I DON'T KNOW.
WHEN DID MASTER AKIHITO TURN INTO THIS...


THAT DAY.
AT FIRST...
WHAT WAS GOING THROUGH HIS HEAD...
TAMURA SENT WORD THAT HE HAD ARRIVED AT SHINBASHI STATION.
AND THEN...
TAK
I'M SURE THAT WAS IT...
TAK
TAK
I'M SURE IT WAS WHEN I FIRST MET HIM...


SHF
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER


THE YOUNG LORD IS COMING HOME.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
ALL UPPER STAFF GO OUT FRONT.
UNDERSTAND? BEST MANNERS ON, PEOPLE.
TAK
TAK
TAK
THAT'S RIGHT.

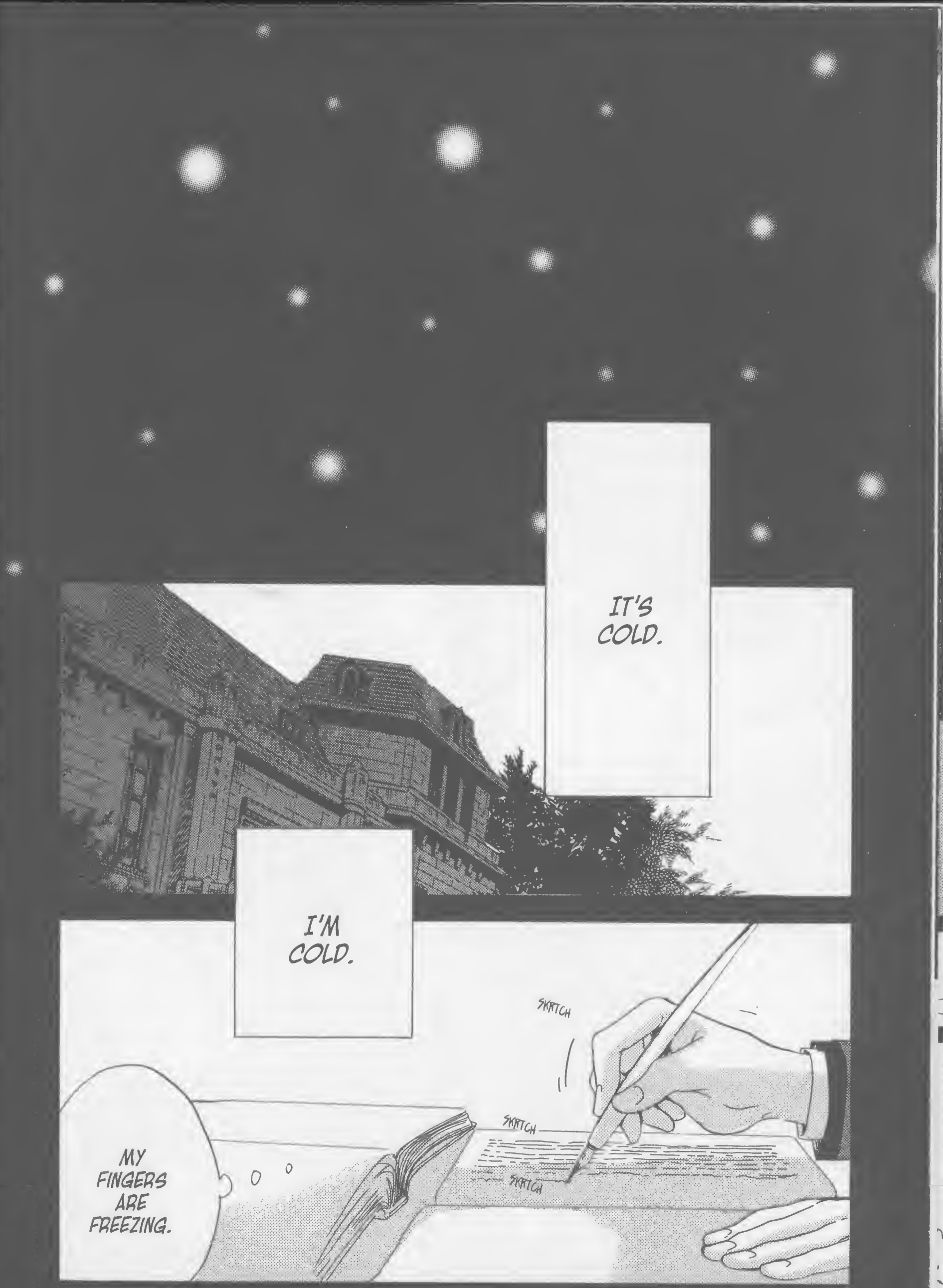

BACK THEN...
...I KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING.
THAT I WOULD STEAL EVERYTHING FROM THIS CHILD.
EVERYTHING HE WAS GIVEN ONCE IT WAS GIVEN.
EVERY SINGLE THING.
WELCOME HOME, MASTER AKIHITO.
I AM THE BUTLER WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE OF YOUR EDUCATION.

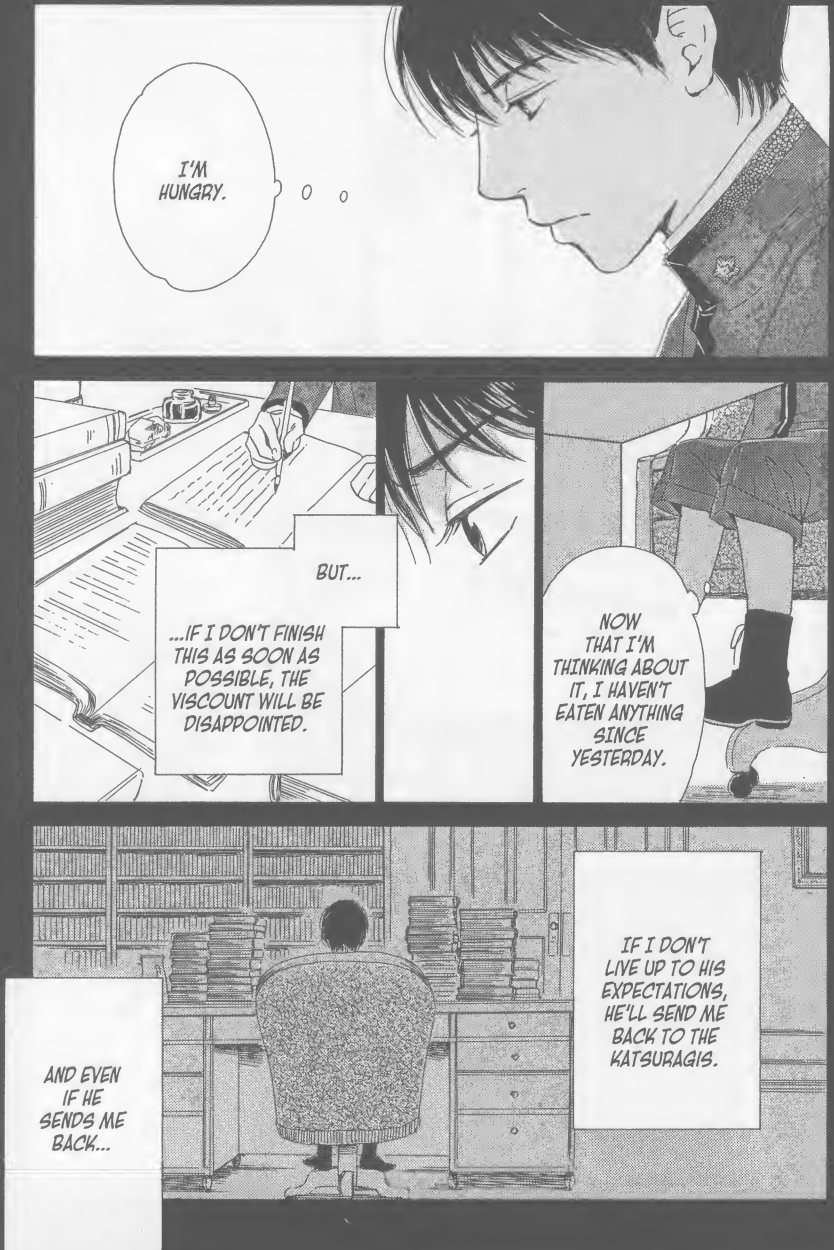

MY NAME IS KATSURAGI.
WHAT HIS PREDECESSOR DID TO ME...
...I WOULD DO TO THIS CHILD.
BACK THEN...
...I KNOW THAT'S WHAT I WAS THINKING, AND-YET...
scene.11 END

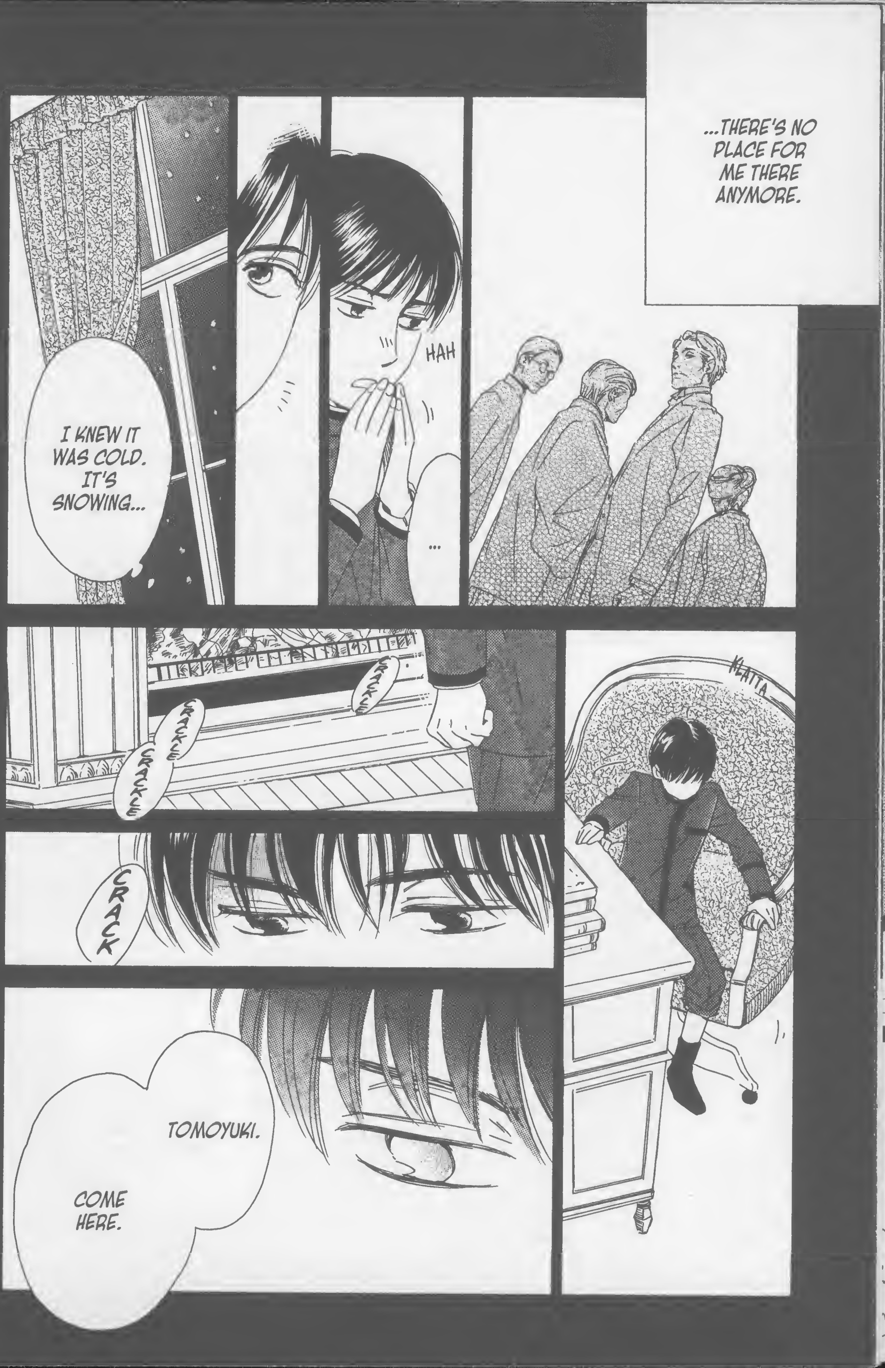
憂鬱な朝

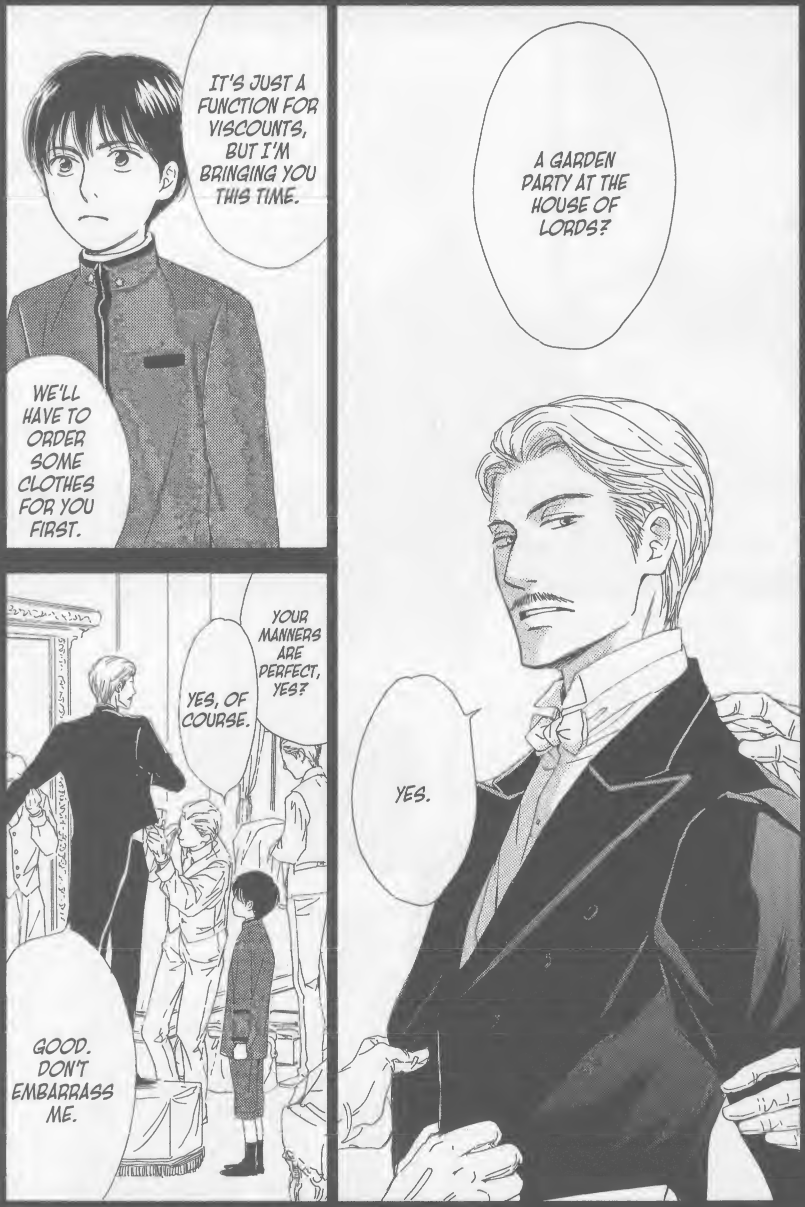
scene.12

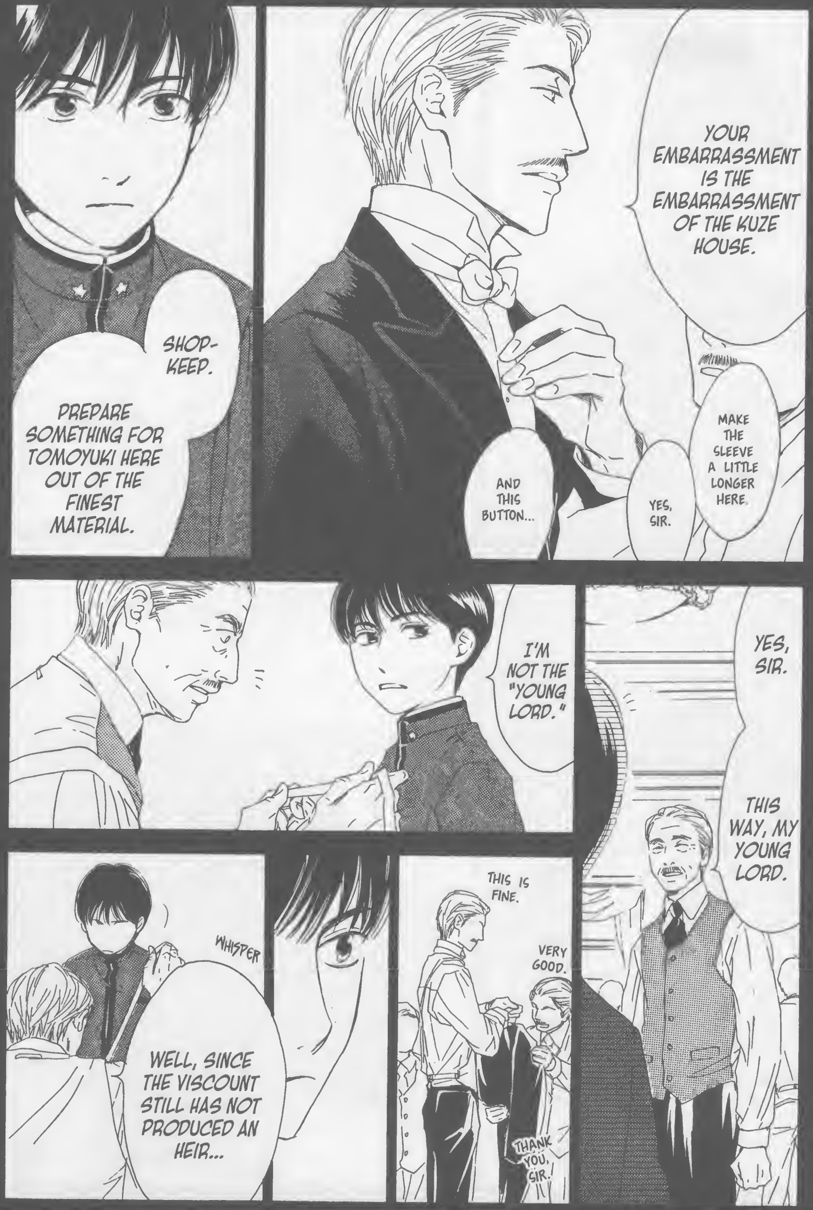
憂鬱な朝

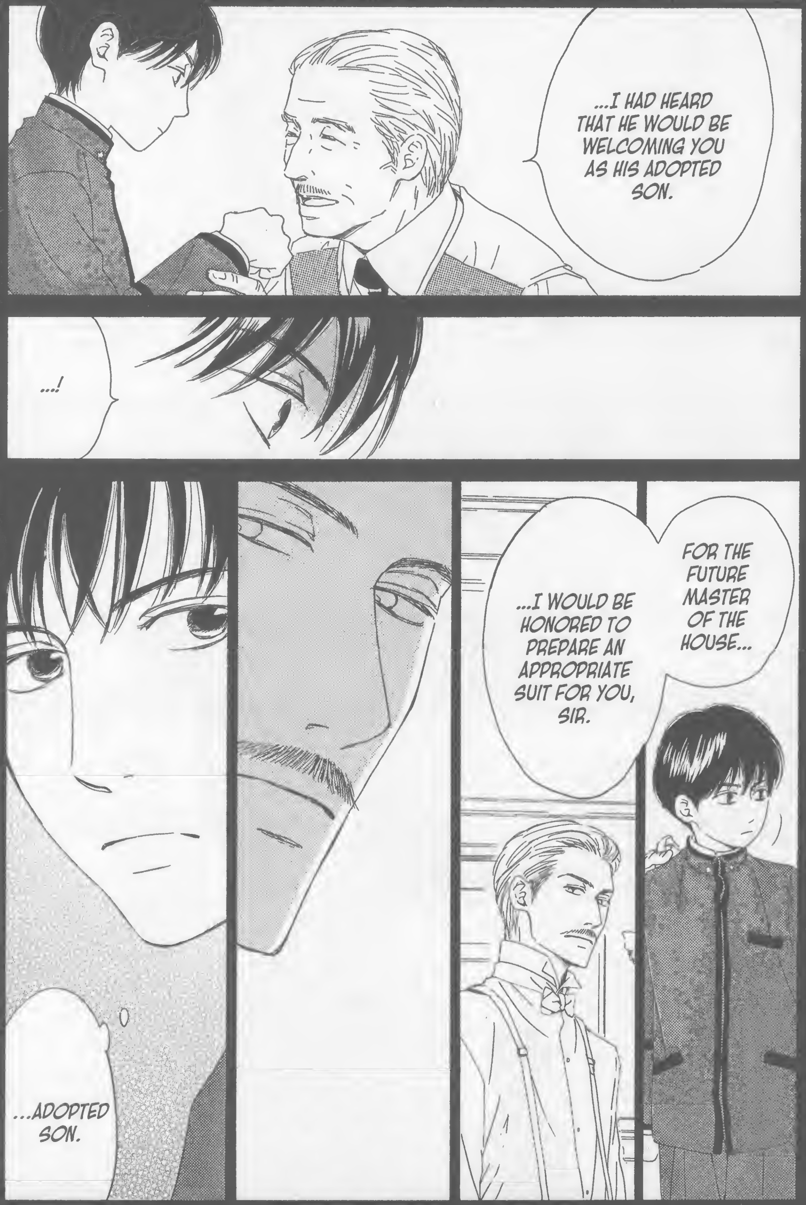

IT'S COLD.
I'M COLD.
SKRTCH
SKRTCH
SKRTCH
MY FINGERS ARE FREEZING.

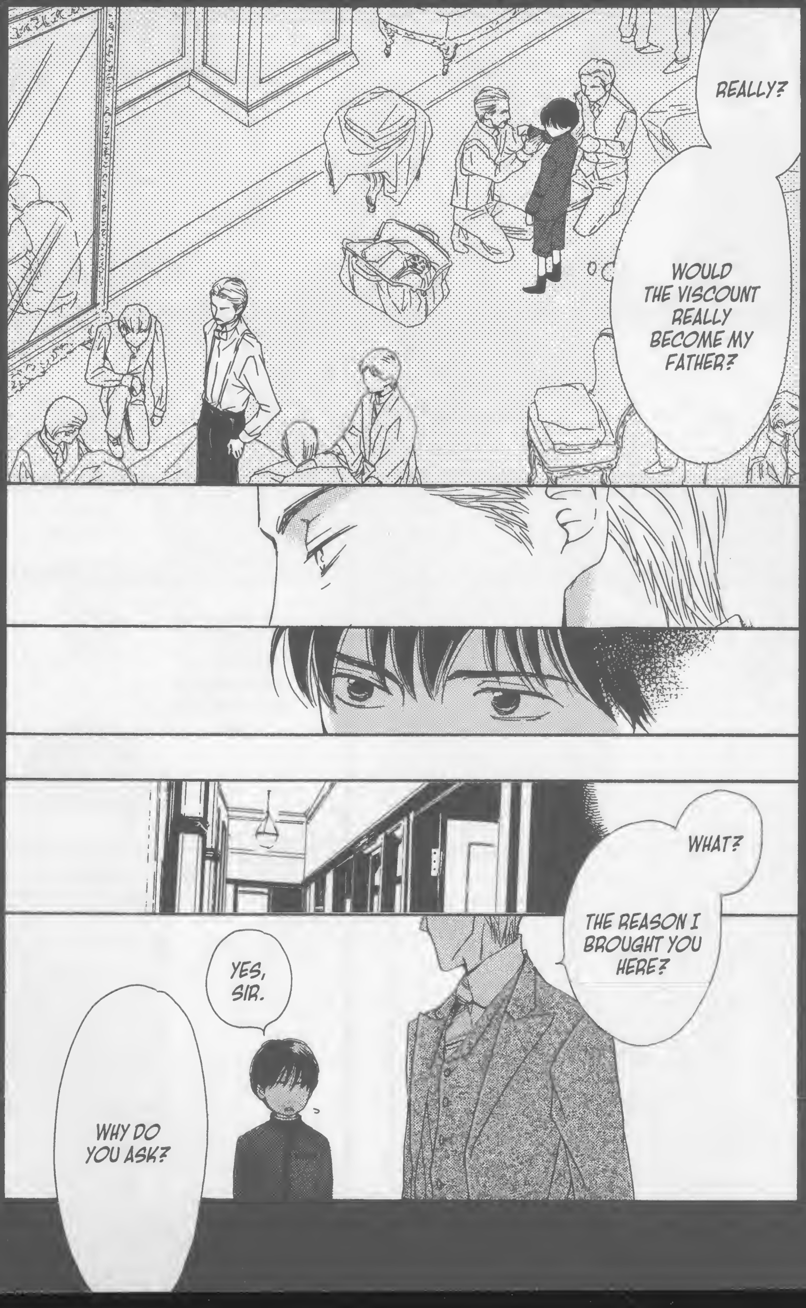

I'M HUNGRY.
NOW THAT I'M THINKING ABOUT IT, I HAVEN'T EATEN ANYTHING SINCE YESTERDAY.
BUT...
...IF I DON'T FINISH THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, THE VISCOUNT WILL BE DISAPPOINTED.
IF I DON'T LIVE UP TO HIS EXPECTATIONS, HE'LL SEND ME BACK TO THE KATSURAGIS.
AND EVEN IF HE SENDS ME BACK...

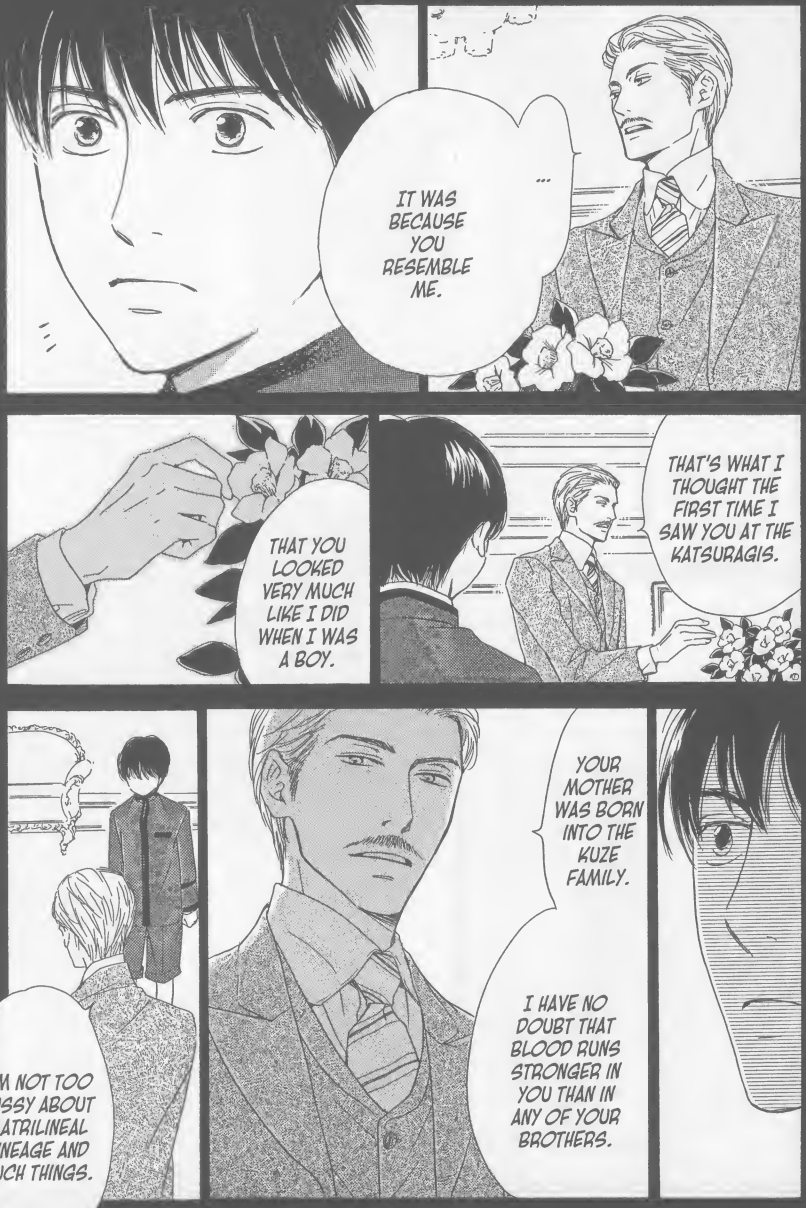

...THERE'S NO PLACE FOR ME THERE ANYMORE.
I KNEW IT WAS COLD. IT'S SNOWING...
HAH
...
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
KLATTA
CRACK
TOMOYUKI.
COME HERE.

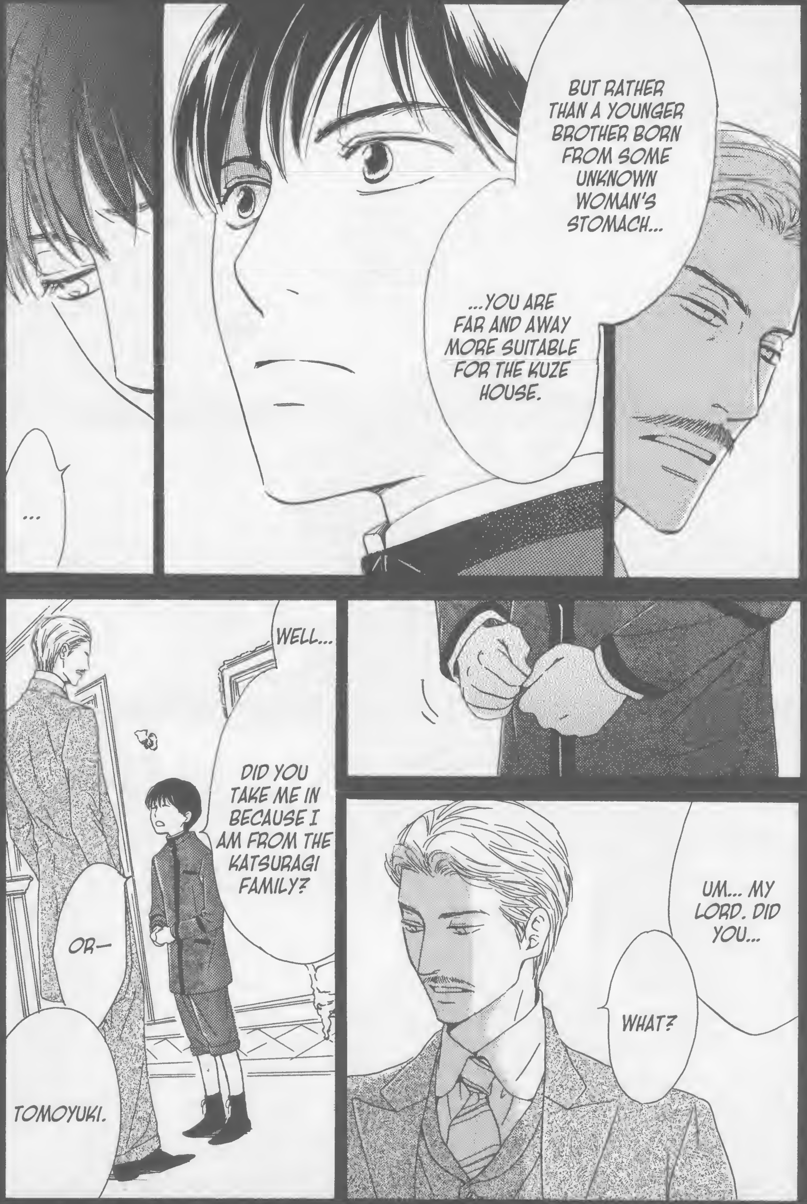

A GARDEN PARTY AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS?
YES.
IT'S JUST A FUNCTION FOR VISCOUNTS, BUT I'M BRINGING YOU THIS TIME.
WE'LL HAVE TO ORDER SOME CLOTHES FOR YOU FIRST.
YOUR MANNERS ARE PERFECT, YES?
YES, OF COURSE.
GOOD. DON'T EMBARRASS ME.

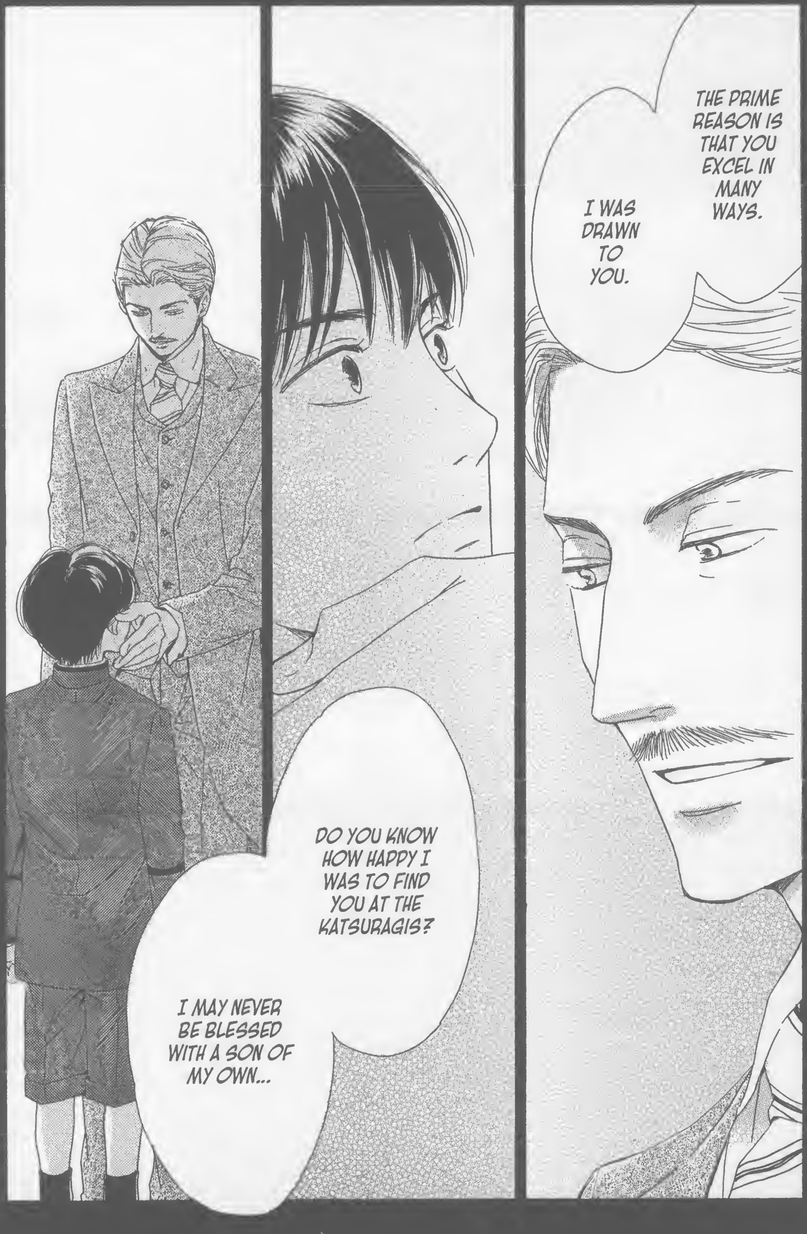

YOUR EMBARRASSMENT IS THE EMBARRASSMENT OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
MAKE THE SLEEVE A LITTLE LONGER HERE.
YES, SIR.
AND THIS BUTTON...
SHOP-KEEP.
PREPARE SOMETHING FOR TOMOYUKI HERE OUT OF THE FINEST MATERIAL.
YES, SIR.
THIS WAY, MY YOUNG LORD.
I'M NOT THE "YOUNG LORD."
THIS IS FINE.
VERY GOOD.
THANK YOU, SIR.
WHISPER
WELL, SINCE THE VISCOUNT STILL HAS NOT PRODUCED AN HEIR...

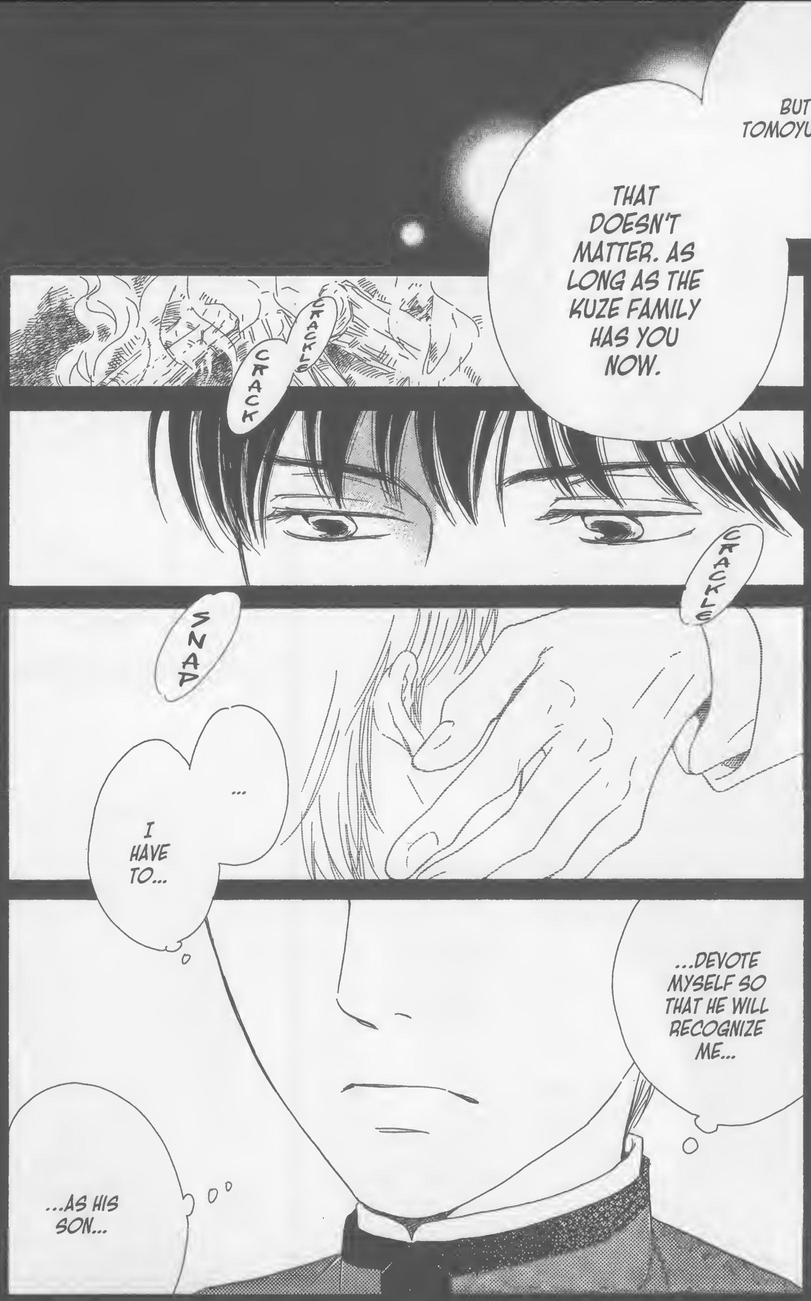

...I HAD HEARD THAT HE WOULD BE WELCOMING YOU AS HIS ADOPTED SON.
...!
FOR THE FUTURE MASTER OF THE HOUSE...
...I WOULD BE HONORED TO PREPARE AN APPROPRIATE SUIT FOR YOU, SIR.
...ADOPTED SON.

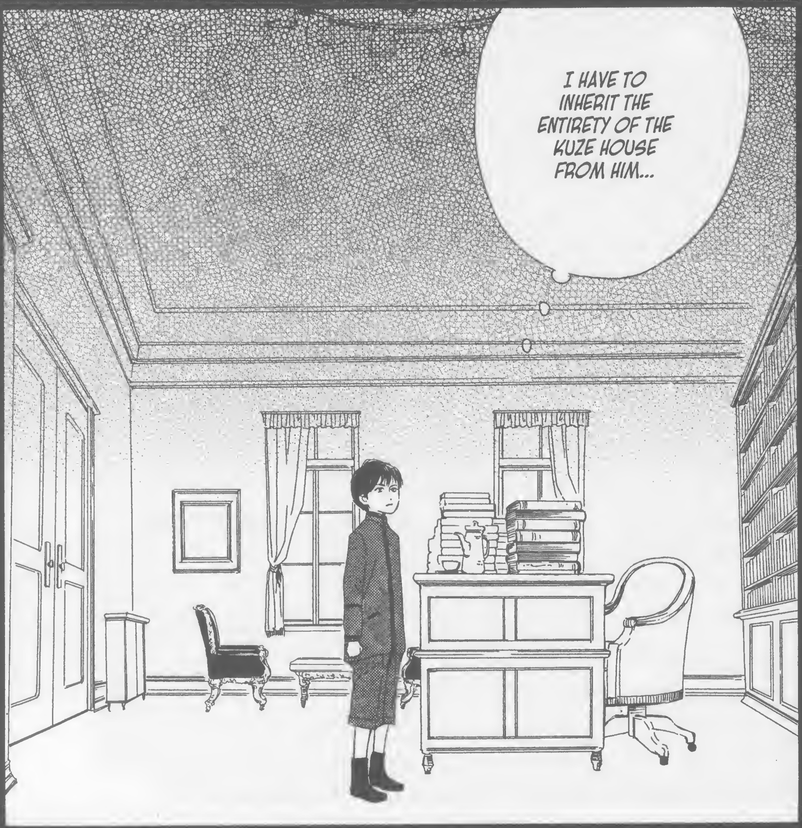

REALLY?
WOULD THE VISCOUNT REALLY BECOME MY FATHER?
WHAT?
THE REASON I BROUGHT YOU HERE?
YES, SIR.
WHY DO YOU ASK?


...
IT WAS BECAUSE YOU RESEMBLE ME.
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT THE FIRST TIME I SAW YOU AT THE KATSURAGIS.
THAT YOU LOOKED VERY MUCH LIKE I DID WHEN I WAS A BOY.
YOUR MOTHER WAS BORN INTO THE KUZE FAMILY.
I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT BLOOD RUNS STRONGER IN YOU THAN IN ANY OF YOUR BROTHERS.
I'M NOT TOO FUSSY ABOUT MATRILINEAL LINEAGE AND SUCH THINGS.

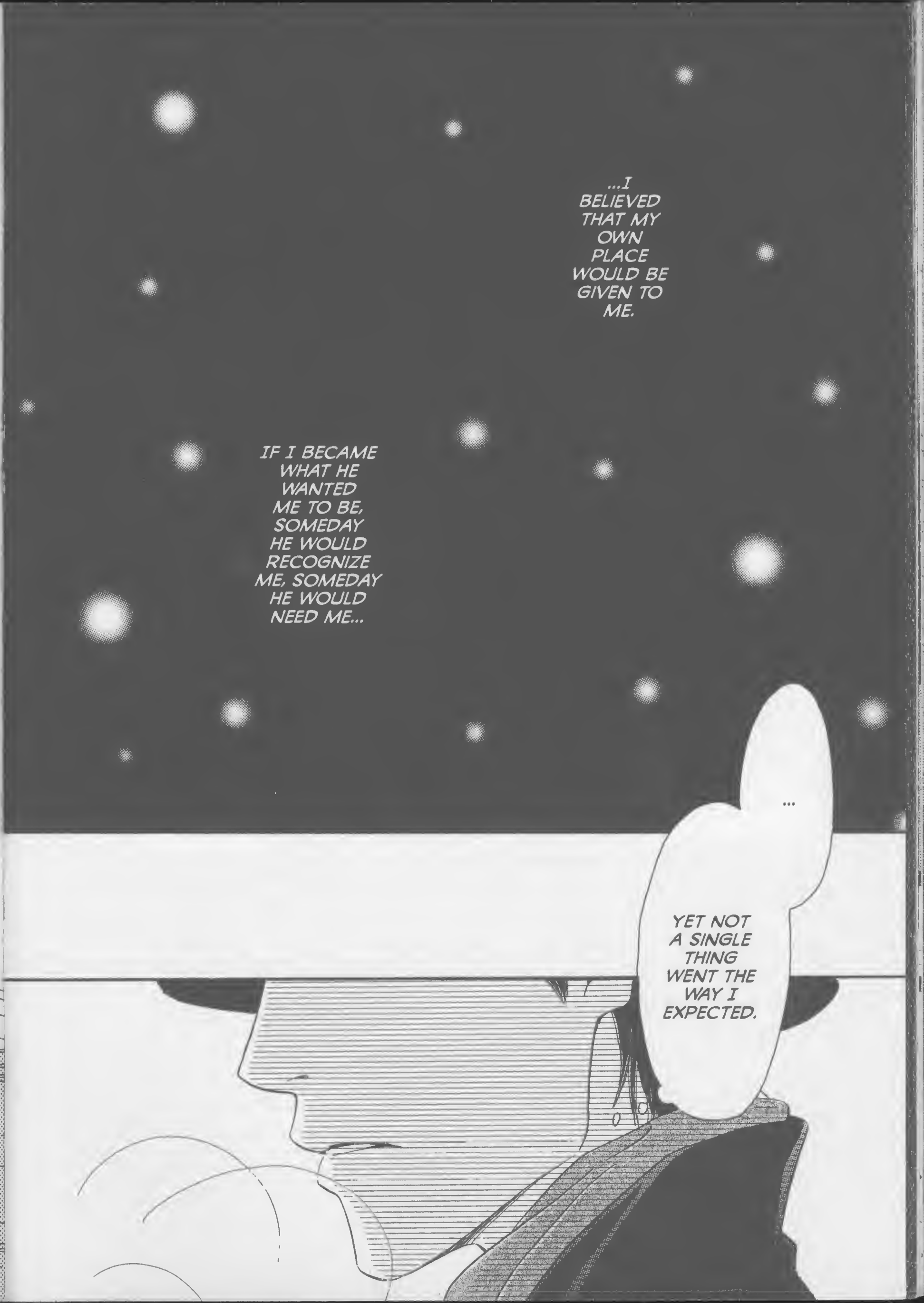

BUT RATHER THAN A YOUNGER BROTHER BORN FROM SOME UNKNOWN WOMAN'S STOMACH...
...YOU ARE FAR AND AWAY MORE SUITABLE FOR THE KUZE HOUSE.
...
UM... MY LORD. DID YOU...
WHAT?
WELL...
DID YOU TAKE ME IN BECAUSE I AM FROM THE KATSURAGI FAMILY?
OR—
TOMOYUKI.

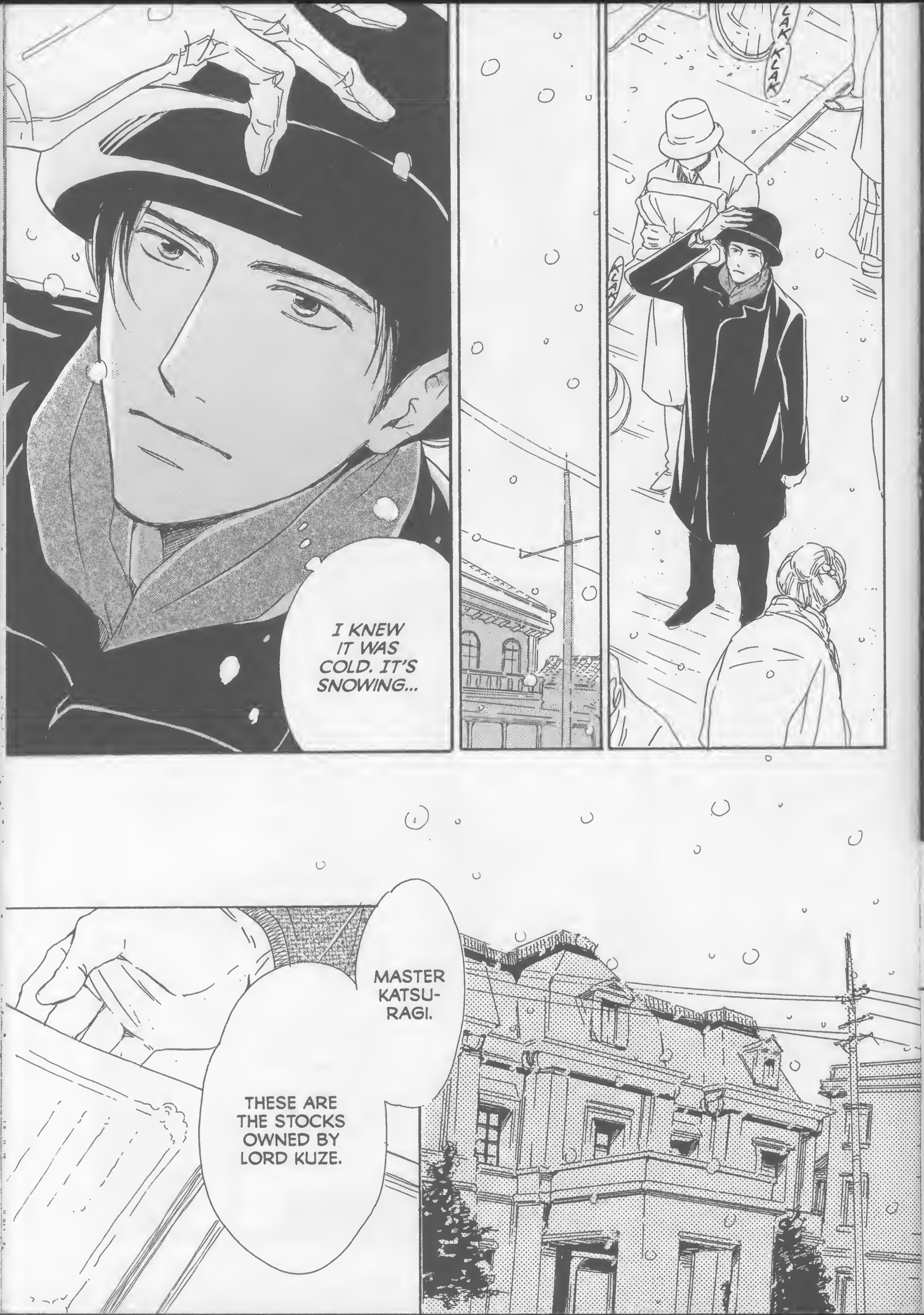

THE PRIME REASON IS THAT YOU EXCEL IN MANY WAYS.
I WAS DRAWN TO YOU.
DO YOU KNOW HOW HAPPY I WAS TO FIND YOU AT THE KATSURAGIS?
I MAY NEVER BE BLESSED WITH A SON OF MY OWN...

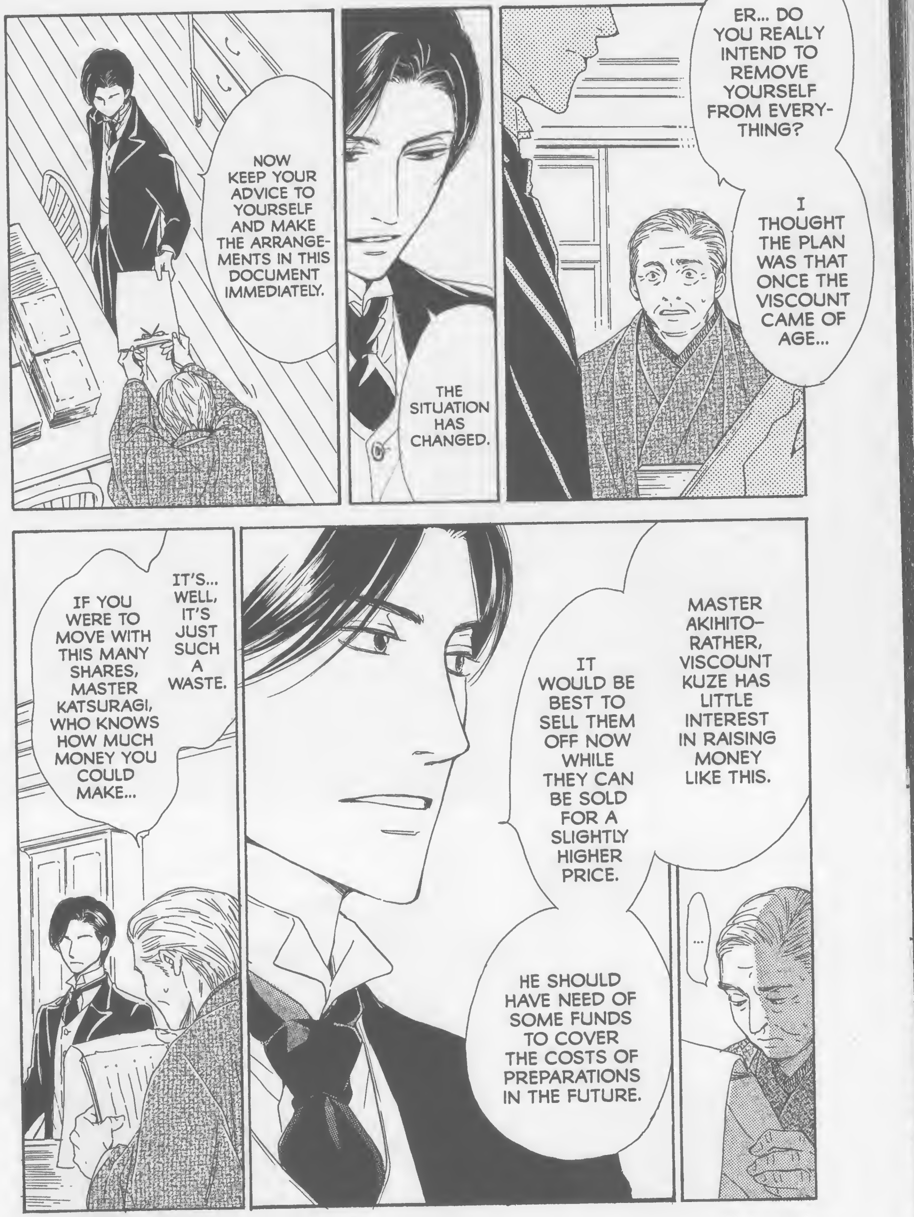

BUT TOMOYUKI...
THAT DOESN'T MATTER. AS LONG AS THE KUZE FAMILY HAS YOU NOW.
CRACKLE
CRACK
CRACKLE
SNAP
...
I HAVE TO...
...DEVOTE MYSELF SO THAT HE WILL RECOGNIZE ME...
...AS HIS SON...

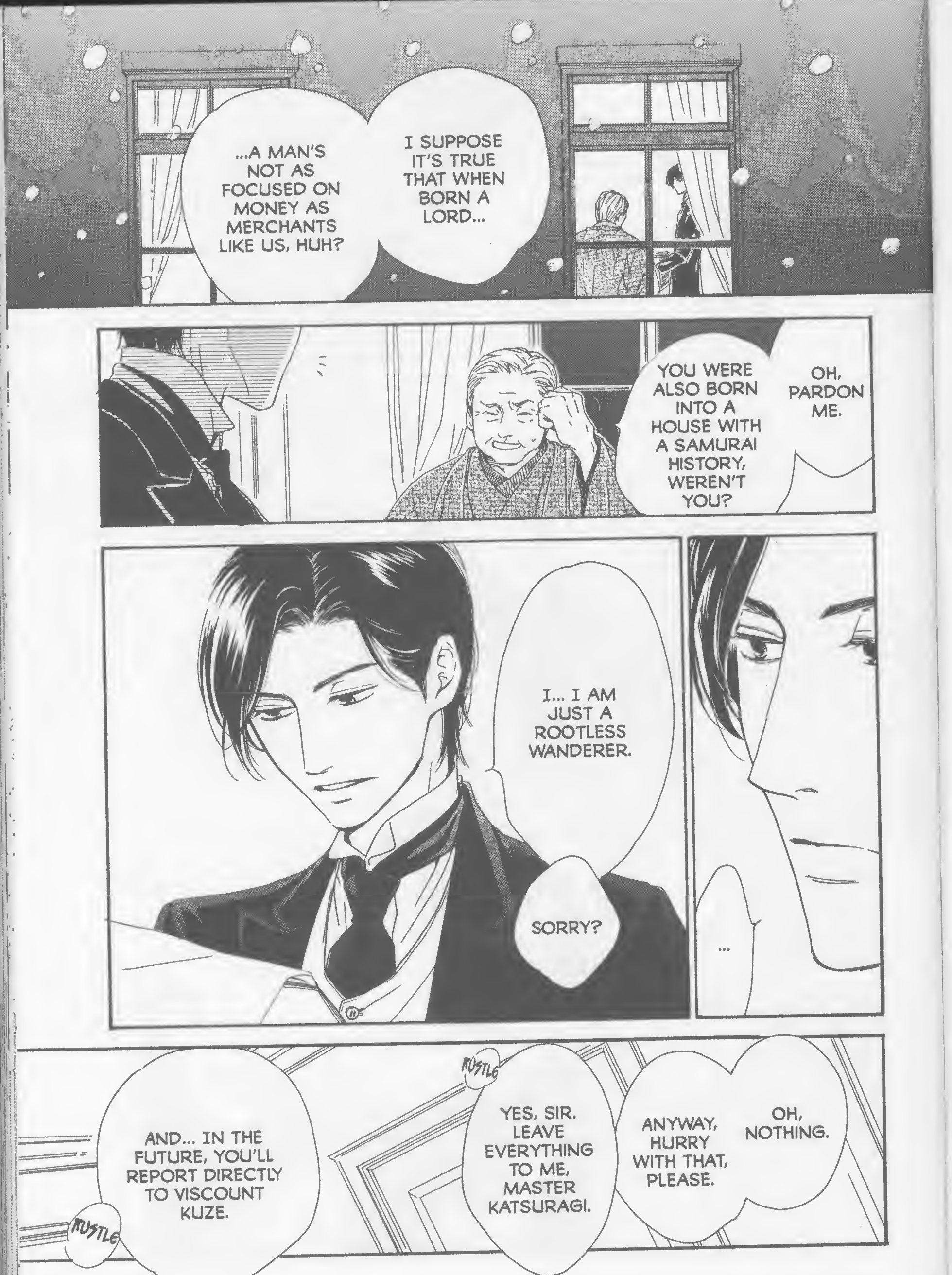

I HAVE TO INHERIT THE ENTIRETY OF THE KUZE HOUSE FROM HIM...

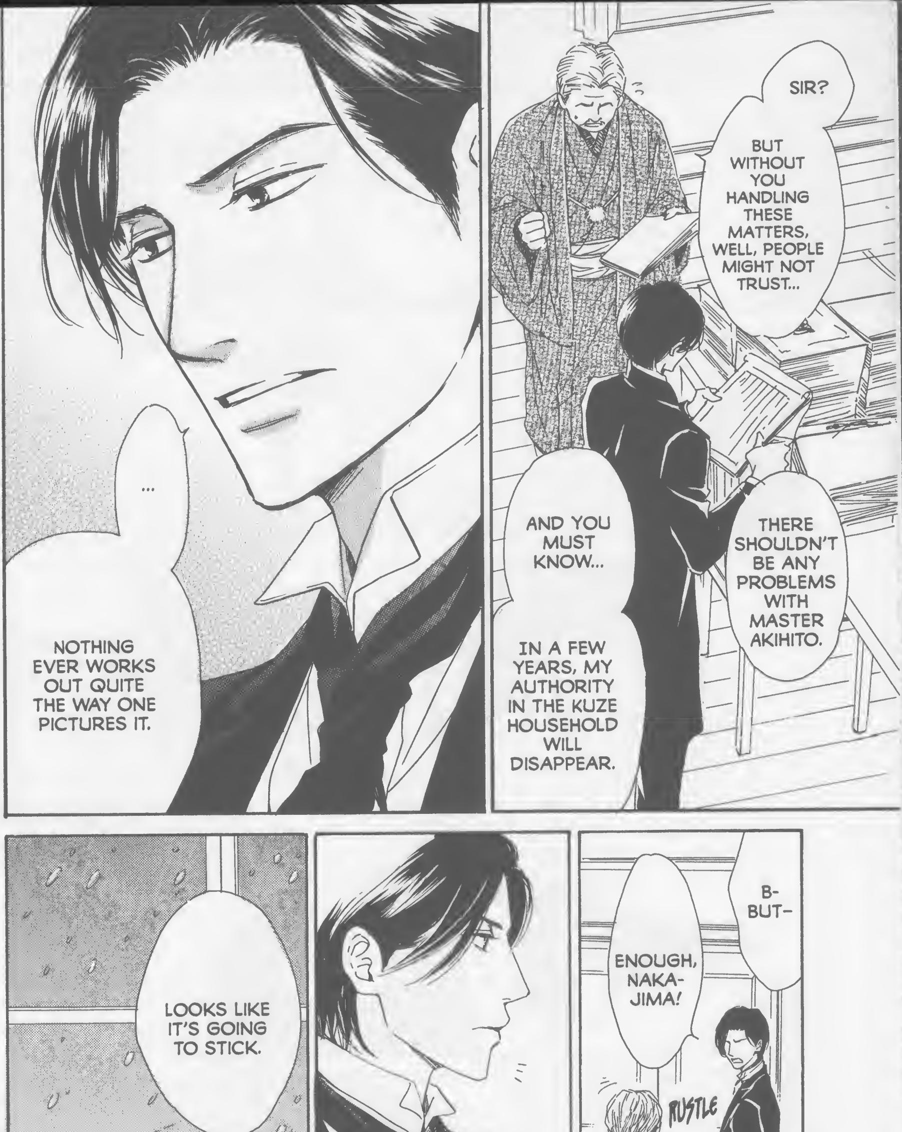
IF I BECAME PERFECT, FAULTLESS...

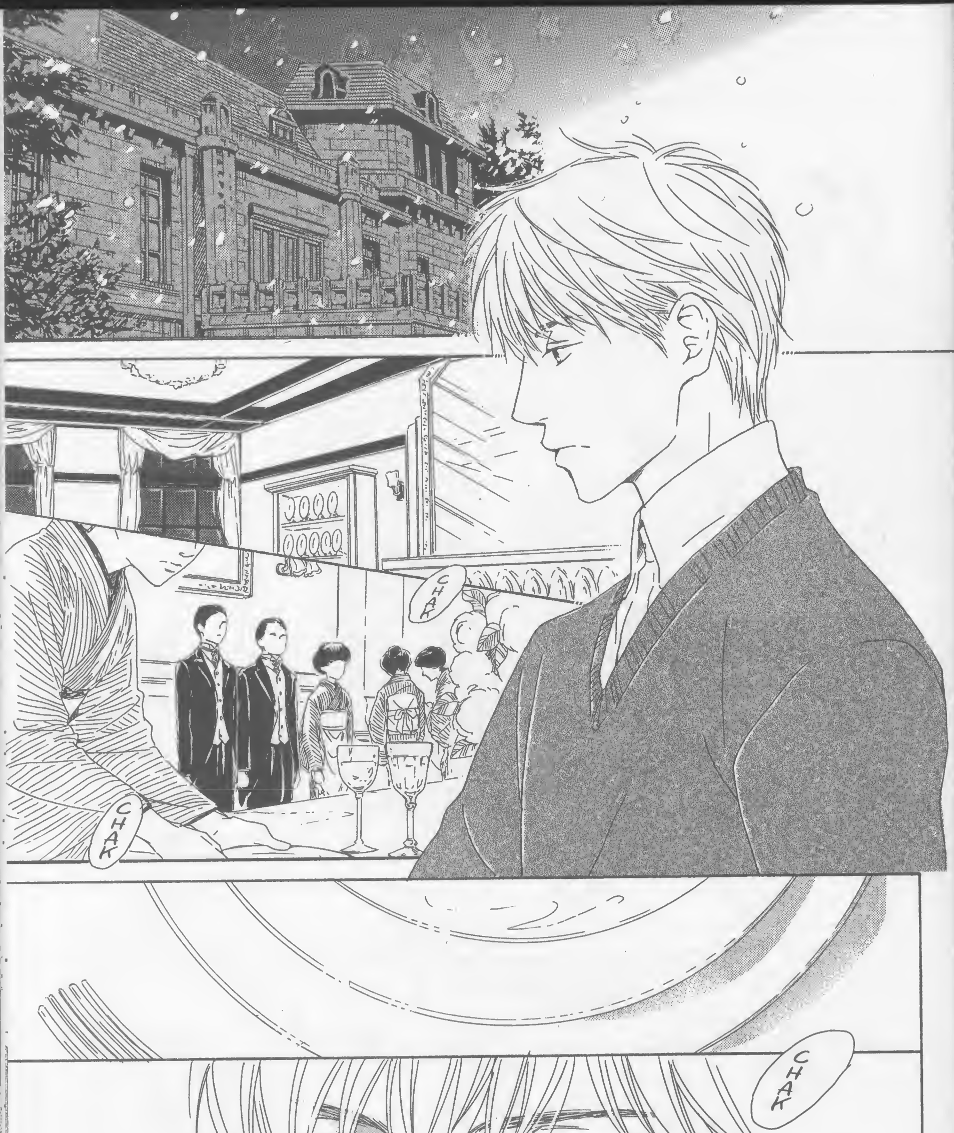

...I BELIEVED THAT MY OWN PLACE WOULD BE GIVEN TO ME.
IF I BECAME WHAT HE WANTED ME TO BE, SOMEDAY HE WOULD RECOGNIZE ME, SOMEDAY HE WOULD NEED ME...
...
YET NOT A SINGLE THING WENT THE WAY I EXPECTED.

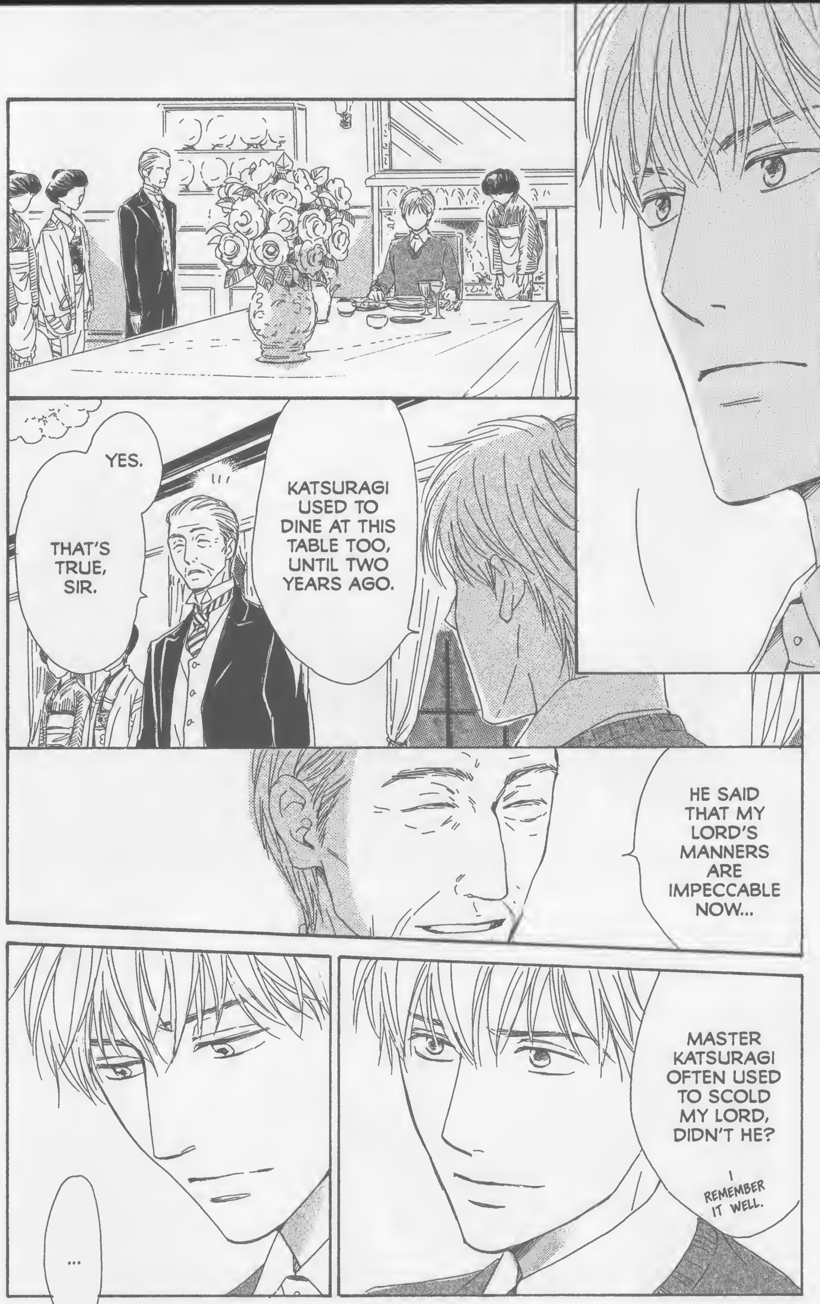

LAK KLAK
KLAK
I KNEW IT WAS COLD. IT'S SNOWING...
MASTER KATSURAGI.
THESE ARE THE STOCKS OWNED BY LORD KUZE.

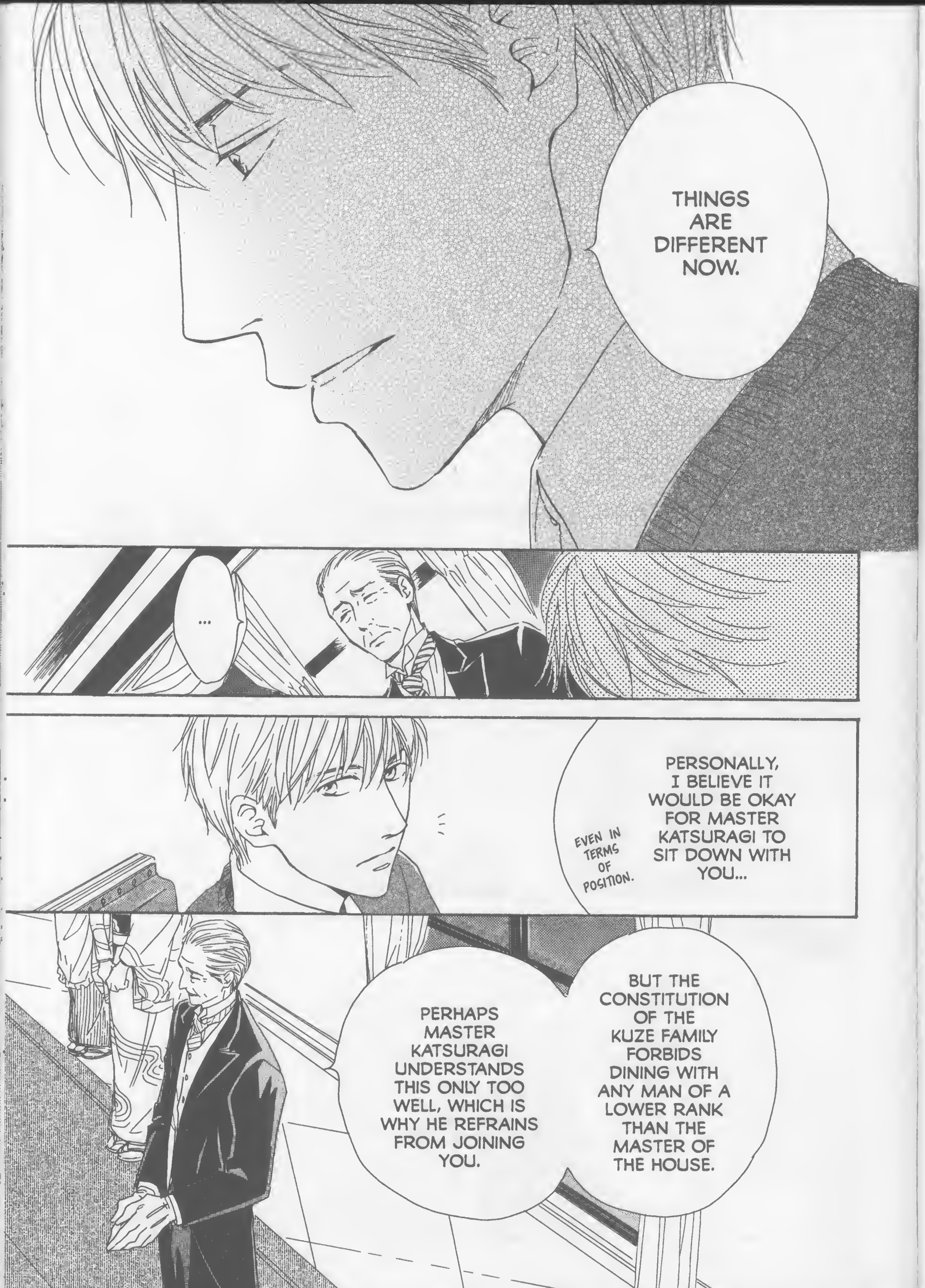

ER... DO YOU REALLY INTEND TO REMOVE YOURSELF FROM EVERYTHING?
I THOUGHT THE PLAN WAS THAT ONCE THE VISCOUNT CAME OF AGE...
THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED.
NOW KEEP YOUR ADVICE TO YOURSELF AND MAKE THE ARRANGEMENTS IN THIS DOCUMENT IMMEDIATELY.
...
MASTER AKIHITO—RATHER, VISCOUNT KUZE HAS LITTLE INTEREST IN RAISING MONEY LIKE THIS.
IT WOULD BE BEST TO SELL THEM OFF NOW WHILE THEY CAN BE SOLD FOR A SLIGHTLY HIGHER PRICE.
HE SHOULD HAVE NEED OF SOME FUNDS TO COVER THE COSTS OF PREPARATIONS IN THE FUTURE.
IT'S... WELL, IT'S JUST SUCH A WASTE.
IF YOU WERE TO MOVE WITH THIS MANY SHARES, MASTER KATSURAGI, WHO KNOWS HOW MUCH MONEY YOU COULD MAKE...

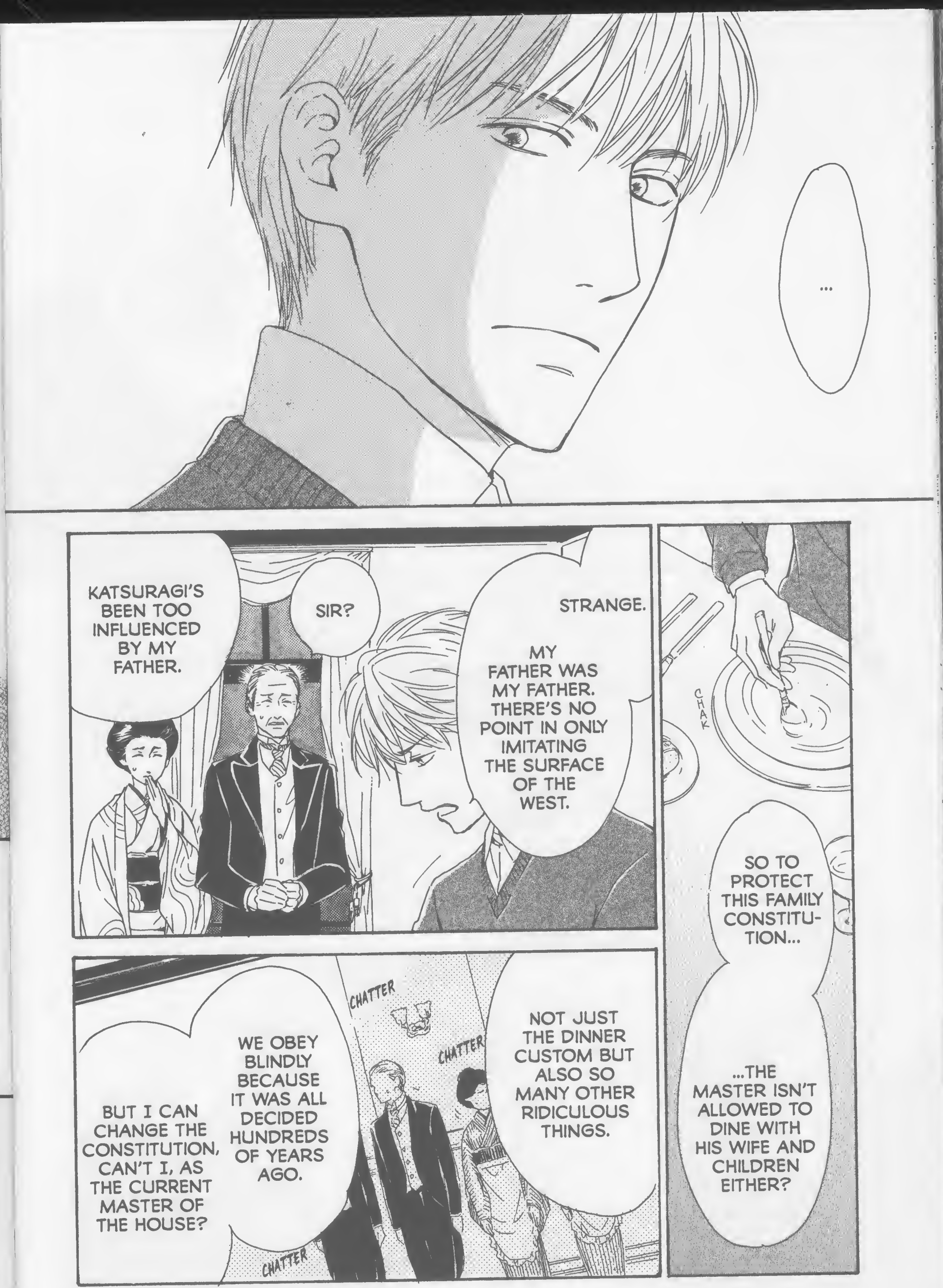

I SUPPOSE IT'S TRUE THAT WHEN BORN A LORD...
...A MAN'S NOT AS FOCUSED ON MONEY AS MERCHANTS LIKE US, HUH?
OH, PARDON ME.
YOU WERE ALSO BORN INTO A HOUSE WITH A SAMURAI HISTORY, WEREN'T YOU?
...
I... I AM JUST A ROOTLESS WANDERER.
SORRY?
OH, NOTHING.
ANYWAY, HURRY WITH THAT, PLEASE.
YES, SIR. LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME, MASTER KATSURAGI.
RUSTLE
AND... IN THE FUTURE, YOU'LL REPORT DIRECTLY TO VISCOUNT KUZE.
RUSTLE

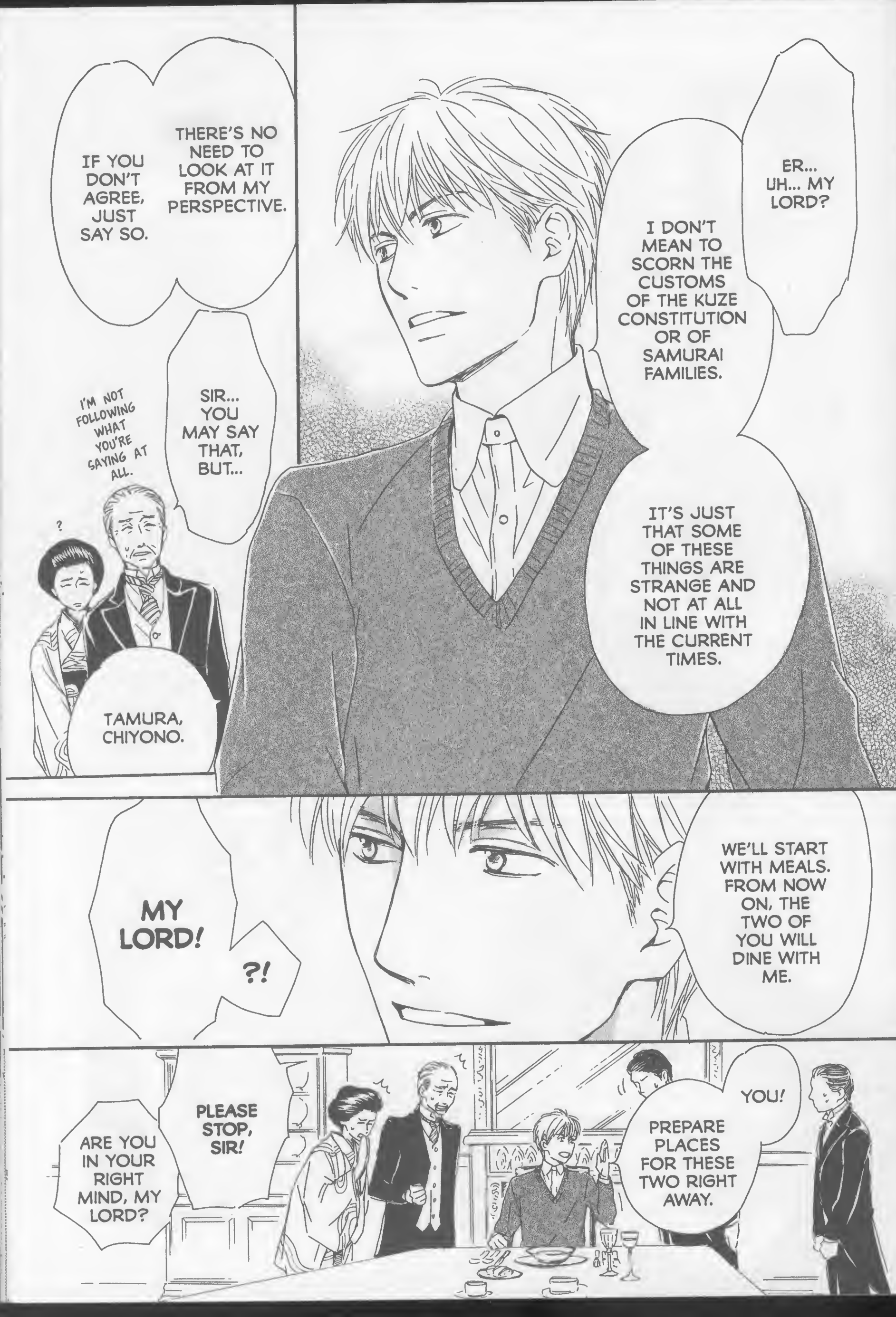

SIR?
BUT WITHOUT YOU HANDLING THESE MATTERS, WELL, PEOPLE MIGHT NOT TRUST...
THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY PROBLEMS WITH MASTER AKIHITO.
AND YOU MUST KNOW...
IN A FEW YEARS, MY AUTHORITY IN THE KUZE HOUSEHOLD WILL DISAPPEAR.
...
NOTHING EVER WORKS OUT QUITE THE WAY ONE PICTURES IT.
B-BUT-
ENOUGH, NAKAJIMA!
RUSTLE
YES, SIR...
LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO STICK.

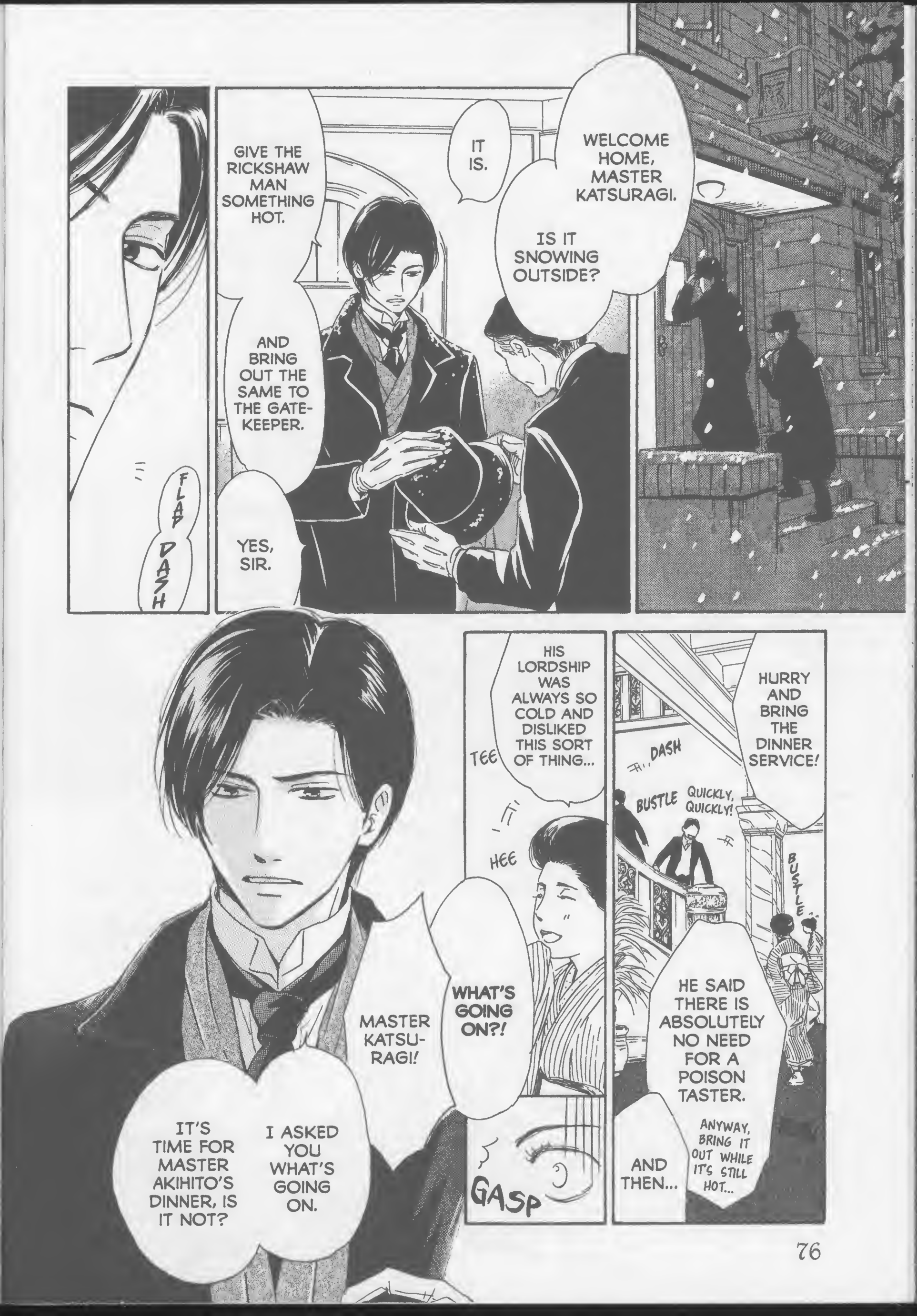

CHAK
CHAK
CHAK

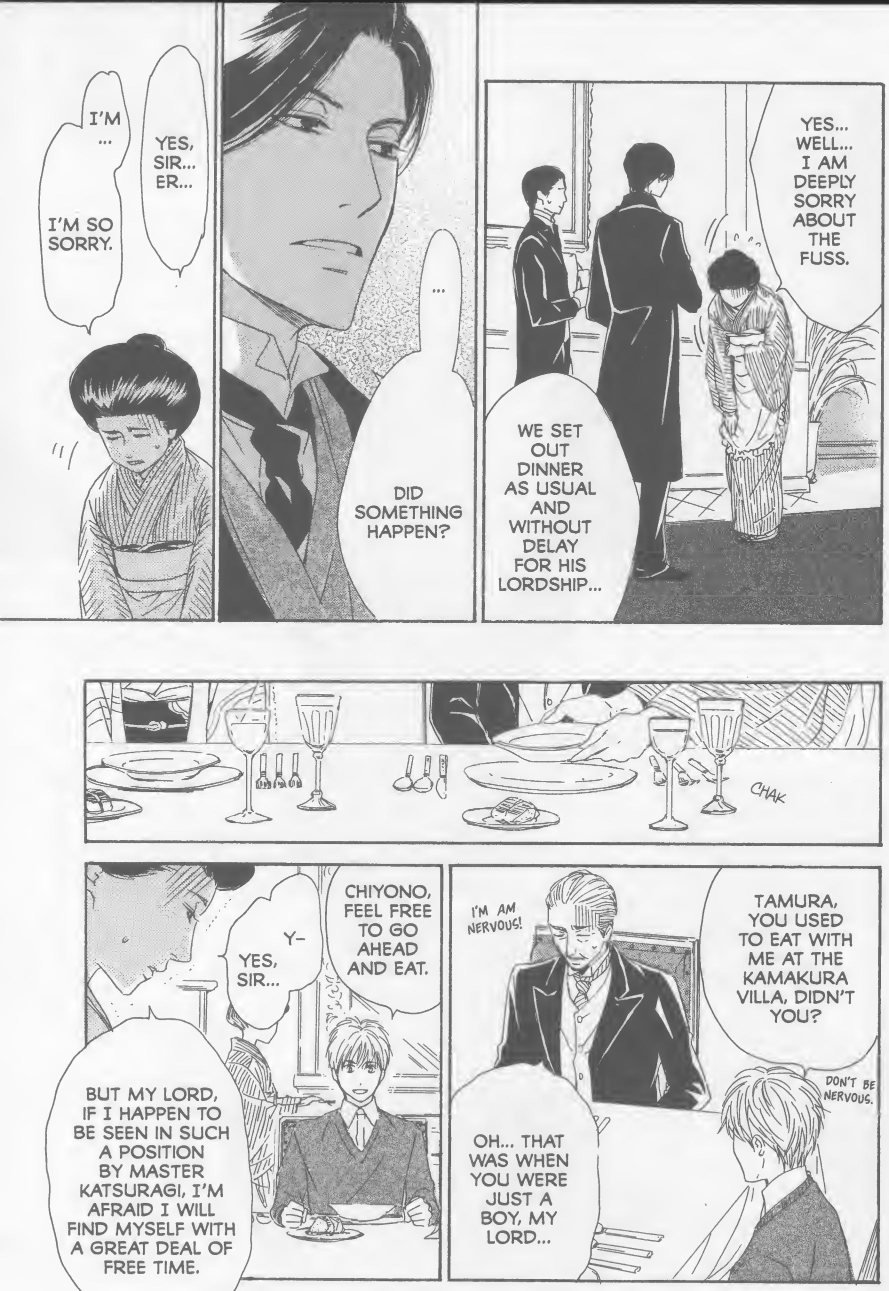

KATSURAGI USED TO DINE AT THIS TABLE TOO, UNTIL TWO YEARS AGO.
YES.
THAT'S TRUE, SIR.
HE SAID THAT MY LORD'S MANNERS ARE IMPECCABLE NOW...
MASTER KATSURAGI OFTEN USED TO SCOLD MY LORD, DIDN'T HE?
I REMEMBER IT WELL.
...

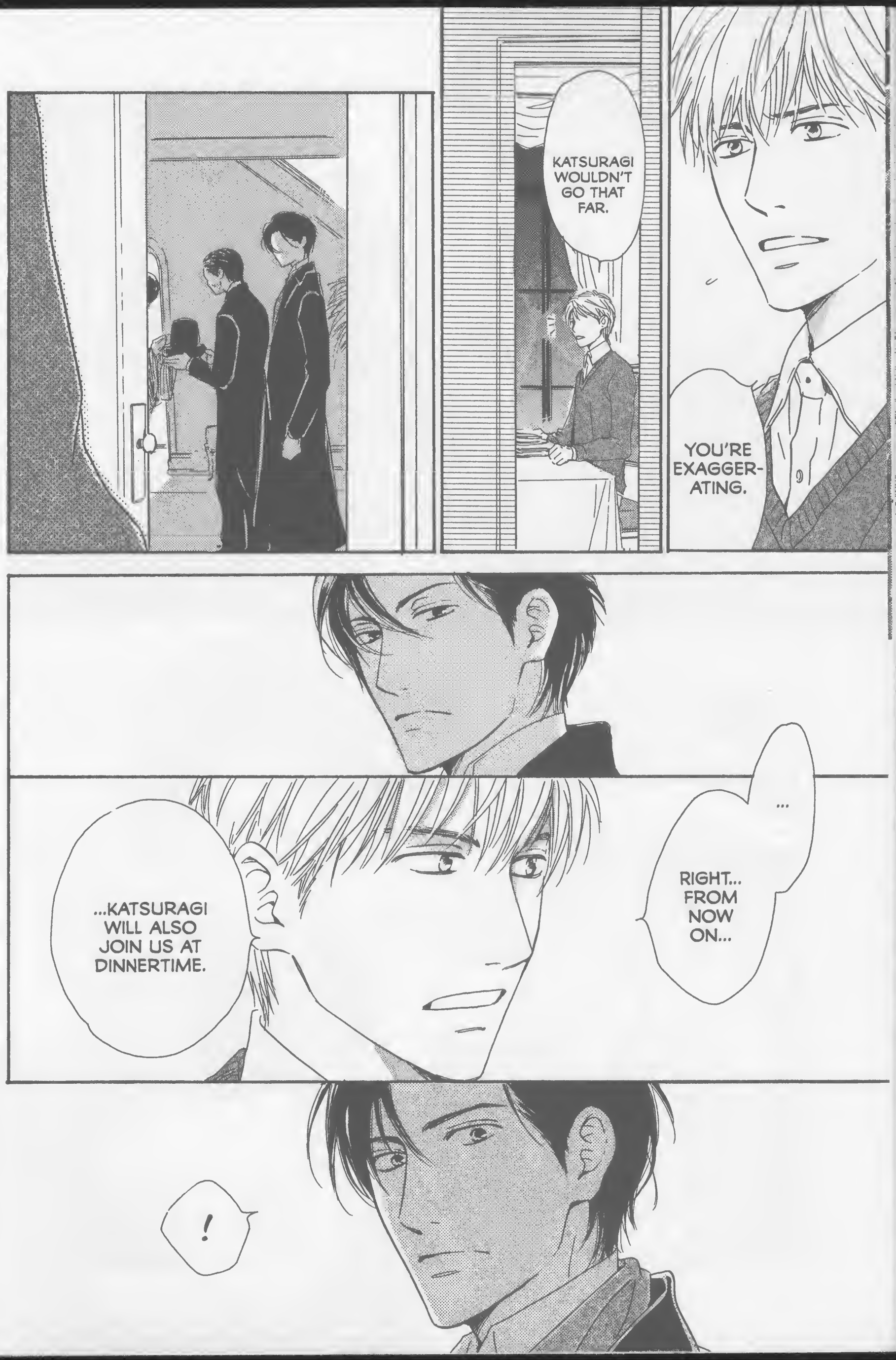

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW.
...
PERSONALLY, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE OKAY FOR MASTER KATSURAGI TO SIT DOWN WITH YOU...
EVEN IN TERMS OF POSITION.
BUT THE CONSTITUTION OF THE KUZE FAMILY FORBIDS DINING WITH ANY MAN OF A LOWER RANK THAN THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
PERHAPS MASTER KATSURAGI UNDERSTANDS THIS ONLY TOO WELL, WHICH IS WHY HE REFRAINS FROM JOINING YOU.

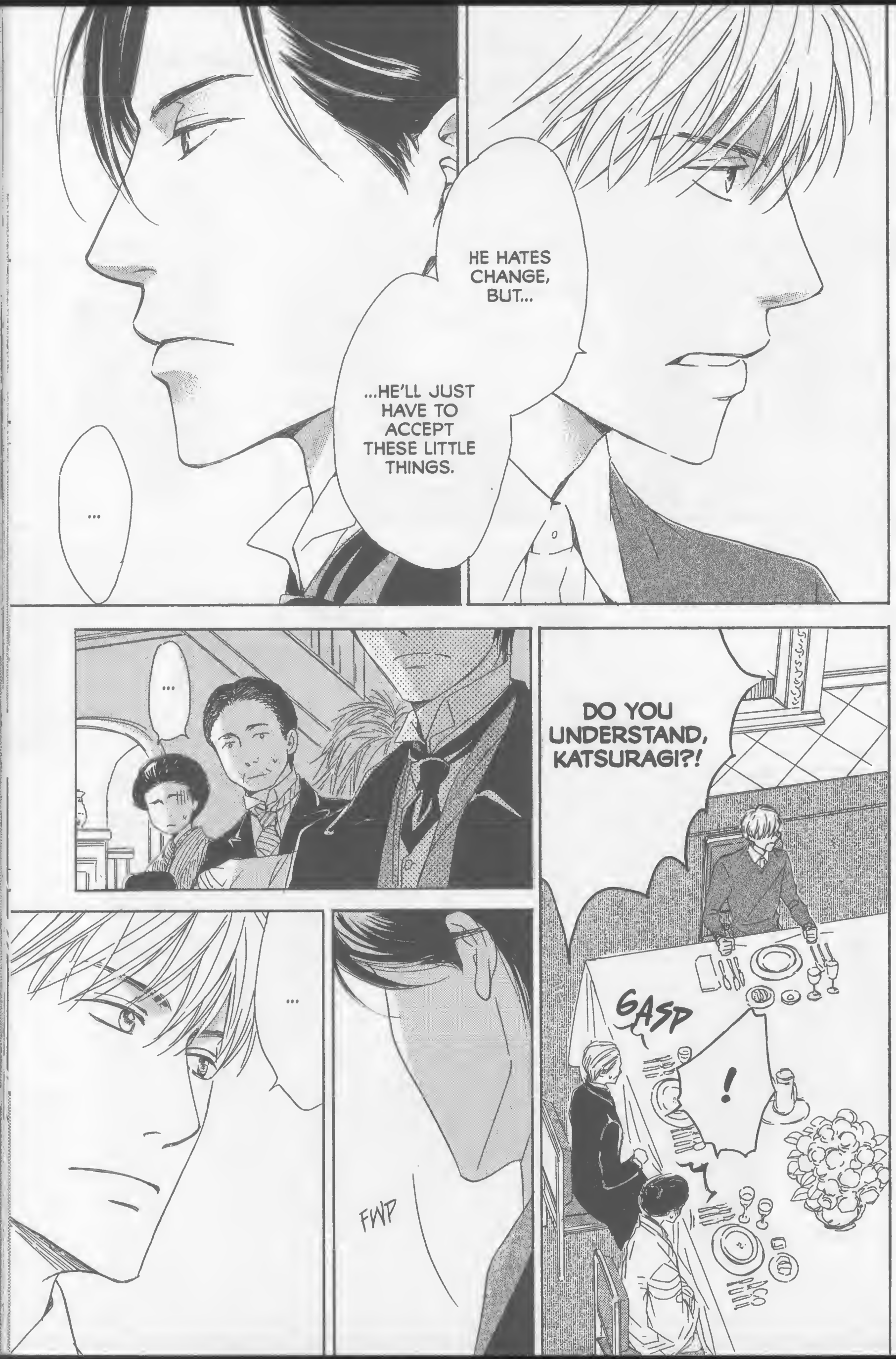

...
CHAK
SO TO PROTECT THIS FAMILY CONSTITUTION...
...THE MASTER ISN'T ALLOWED TO DINE WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN EITHER?
STRANGE.
MY FATHER WAS MY FATHER. THERE'S NO POINT IN ONLY IMITATING THE SURFACE OF THE WEST.
SIR?
KATSURAGI'S BEEN TOO INFLUENCED BY MY FATHER.
NOT JUST THE DINNER CUSTOM BUT ALSO SO MANY OTHER RIDICULOUS THINGS.
CHATTER
CHATTER
WE OBEY BLINDLY BECAUSE IT WAS ALL DECIDED HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO.
BUT I CAN CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION, CAN'T I, AS THE CURRENT MASTER OF THE HOUSE?
CHATTER

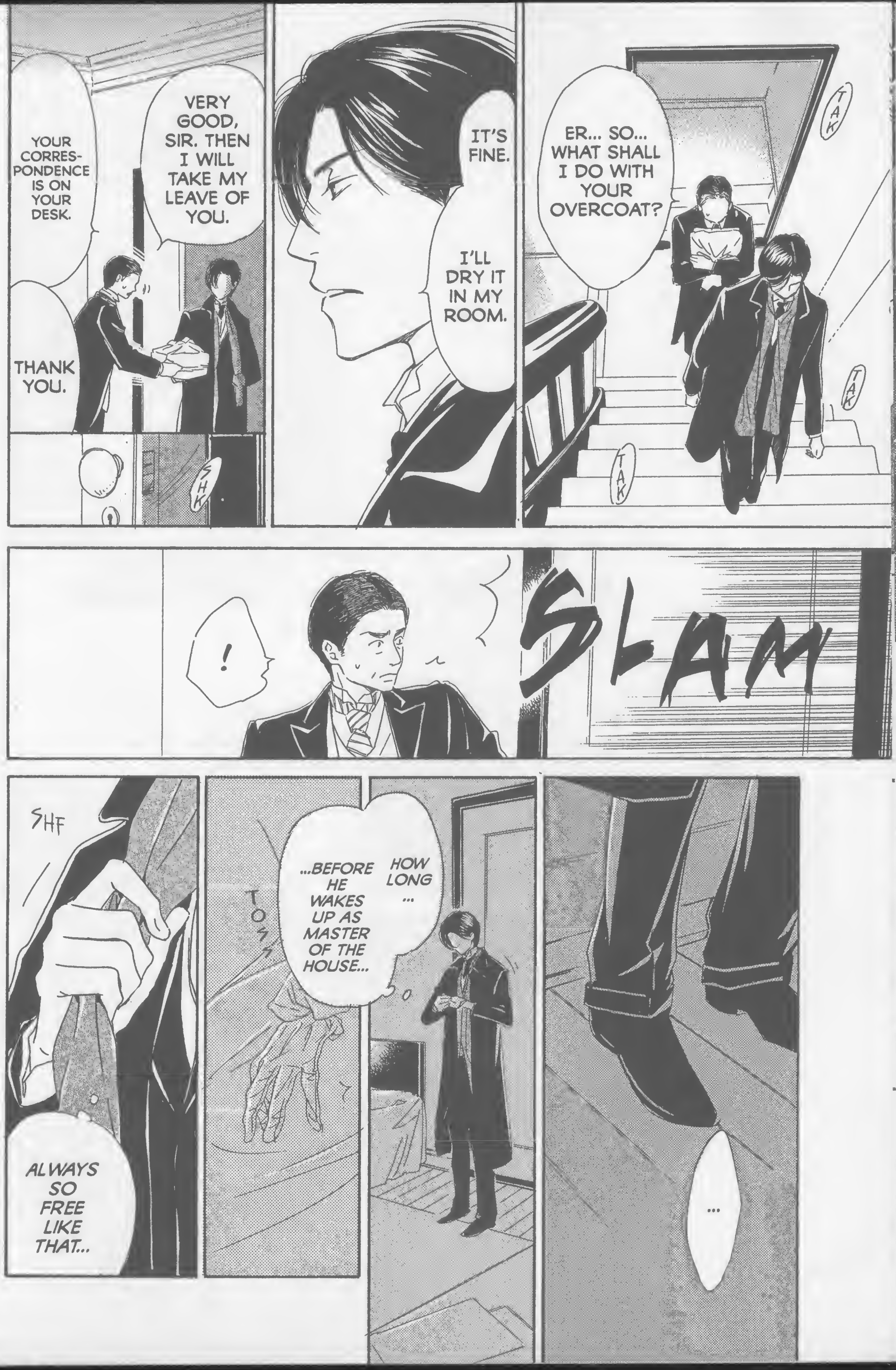

ER... UH... MY LORD?
I DON'T MEAN TO SCORN THE CUSTOMS OF THE KUZE CONSTITUTION OR OF SAMURAI FAMILIES.
IT'S JUST THAT SOME OF THESE THINGS ARE STRANGE AND NOT AT ALL IN LINE WITH THE CURRENT TIMES.
THERE'S NO NEED TO LOOK AT IT FROM MY PERSPECTIVE.
IF YOU DON'T AGREE, JUST SAY SO.
SIR... YOU MAY SAY THAT, BUT...
I'M NOT FOLLOWING WHAT YOU'RE SAYING AT ALL.
?
TAMURA, CHIYONO.
WE'LL START WITH MEALS. FROM NOW ON, THE TWO OF YOU WILL DINE WITH ME.
?!
MY LORD!
YOU!
PREPARE PLACES FOR THESE TWO RIGHT AWAY.
PLEASE STOP, SIR!
ARE YOU IN YOUR RIGHT MIND, MY LORD?

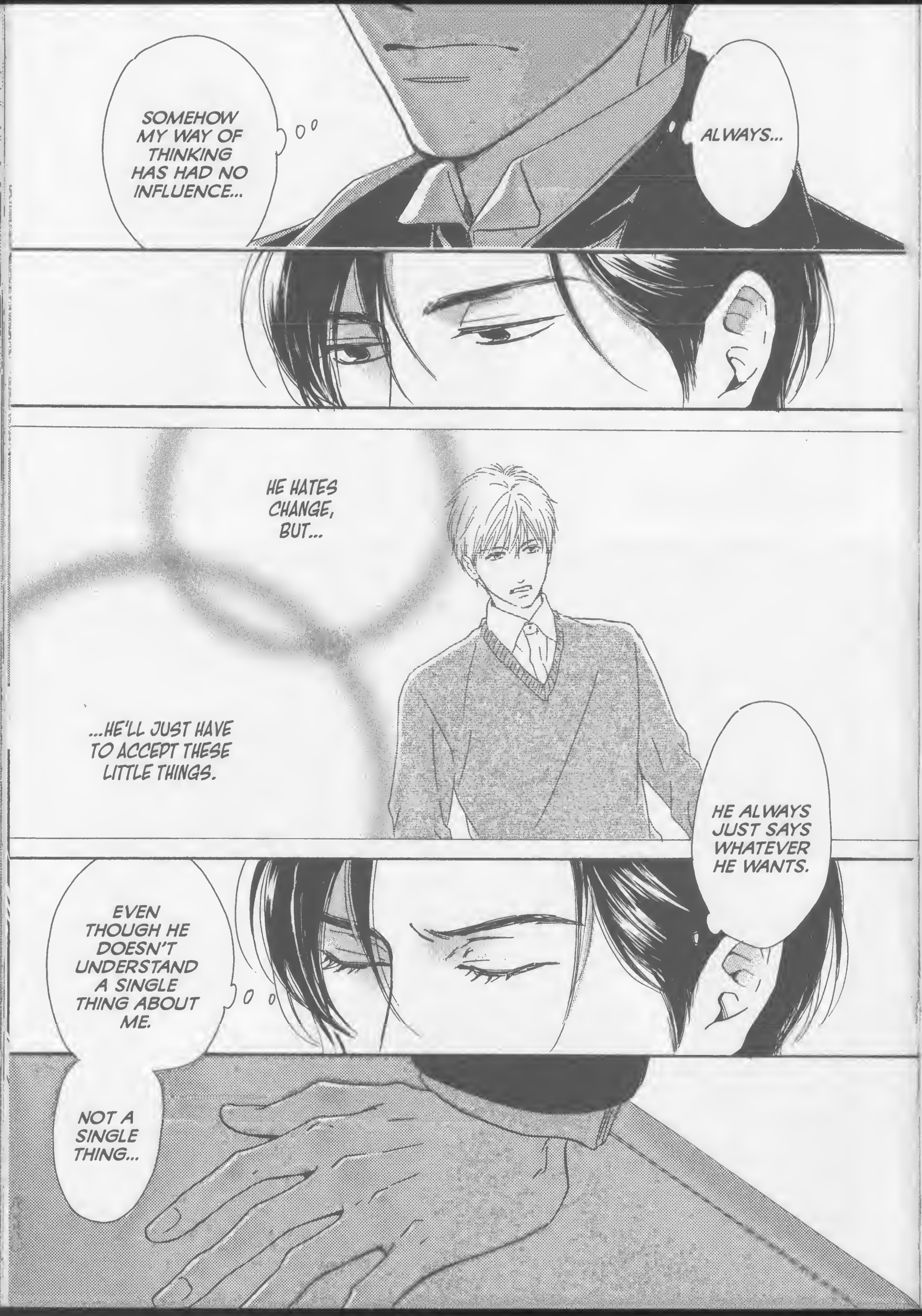

WELCOME HOME, MASTER KATSURAGI.
IS IT SNOWING OUTSIDE?
IT IS.
GIVE THE RICKSHAW MAN SOMETHING HOT.
AND BRING OUT THE SAME TO THE GATEKEEPER.
YES, SIR.
FLAP DASH
HURRY AND BRING THE DINNER SERVICE!
DASH
QUICKLY, QUICKLY!
BUSTLE
BUSTLE...
HE SAID THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO NEED FOR A POISON TASTER.
AND THEN...
ANYWAY, BRING IT OUT WHILE IT'S STILL HOT...
HIS LORDSHIP WAS ALWAYS SO COLD AND DISLIKED THIS SORT OF THING...
TEE
HEE
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
MASTER KATSURAGI!
GASP
I ASKED YOU WHAT'S GOING ON.
IT'S TIME FOR MASTER AKIHITO'S DINNER, IS IT NOT?

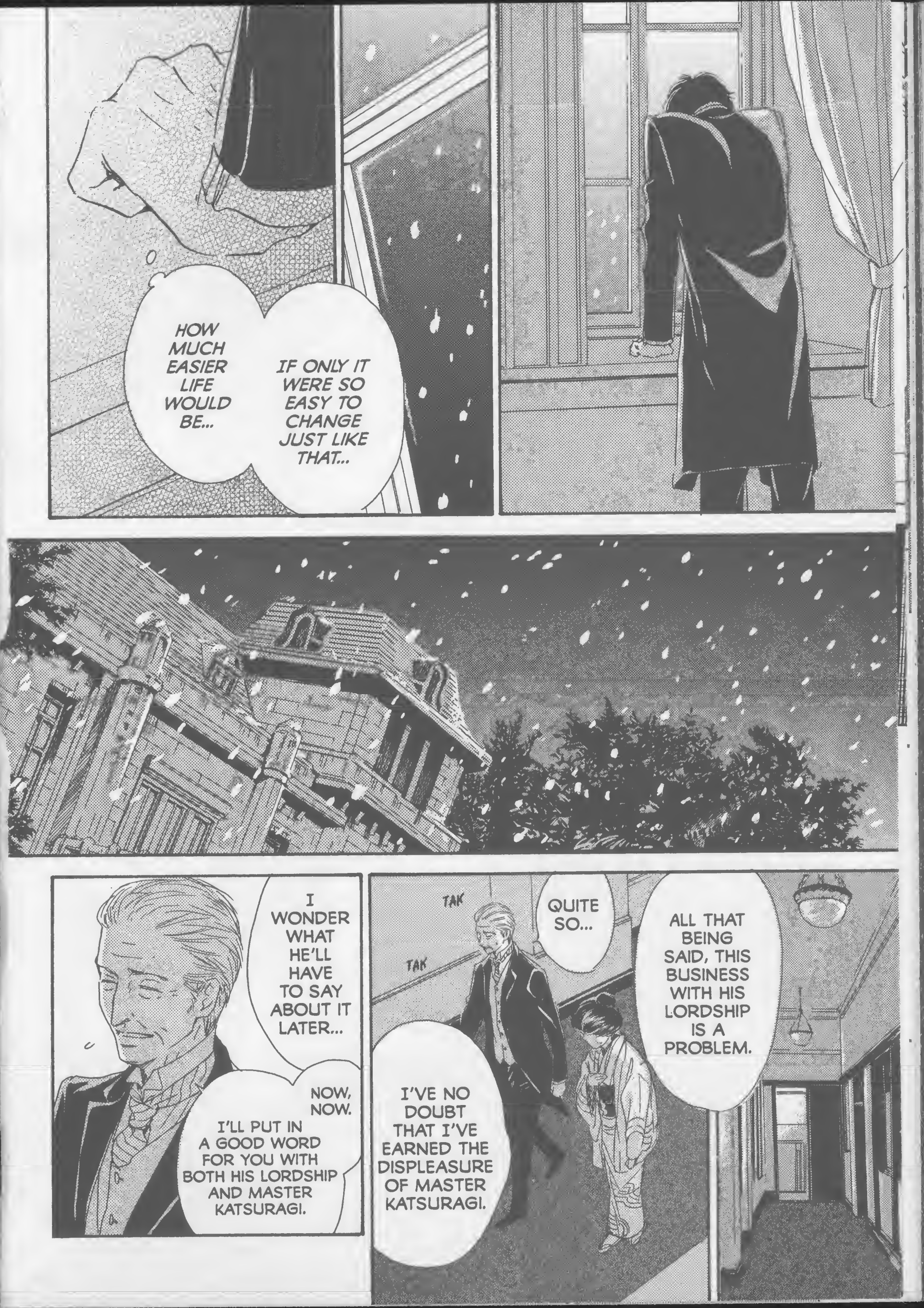

YES... WELL... I AM DEEPLY SORRY ABOUT THE FUSS.
WE SET OUT DINNER AS USUAL AND WITHOUT DELAY FOR HIS LORDSHIP...
...
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
YES, SIR... ER...
I'M ...
I'M SO SORRY.
CHAK
TAMURA, YOU USED TO EAT WITH ME AT THE KAMAKURA VILLA, DIDN'T YOU?
I'M AM NERVOUS!
DON'T BE NERVOUS.
OH... THAT WAS WHEN YOU WERE JUST A BOY, MY LORD...
CHIYONO, FEEL FREE TO GO AHEAD AND EAT.
Y- YES, SIR...
BUT MY LORD, IF I HAPPEN TO BE SEEN IN SUCH A POSITION BY MASTER KATSURAGI, I'M AFRAID I WILL FIND MYSELF WITH A GREAT DEAL OF FREE TIME.

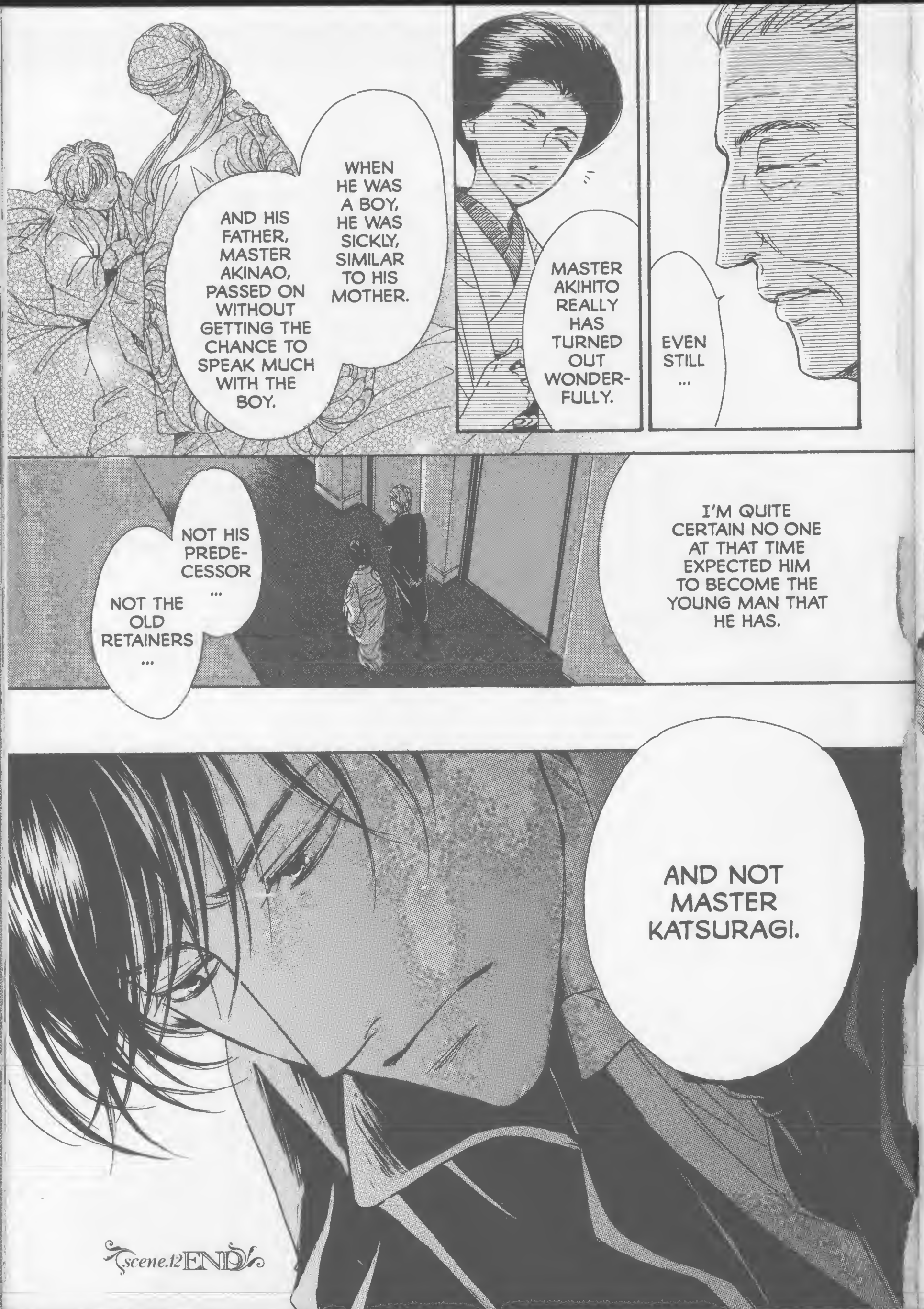

YOU'RE EXAGGERATING.
KATSURAGI WOULDN'T GO THAT FAR.
...
RIGHT... FROM NOW ON...
...KATSURAGI WILL ALSO JOIN US AT DINNERTIME.
!

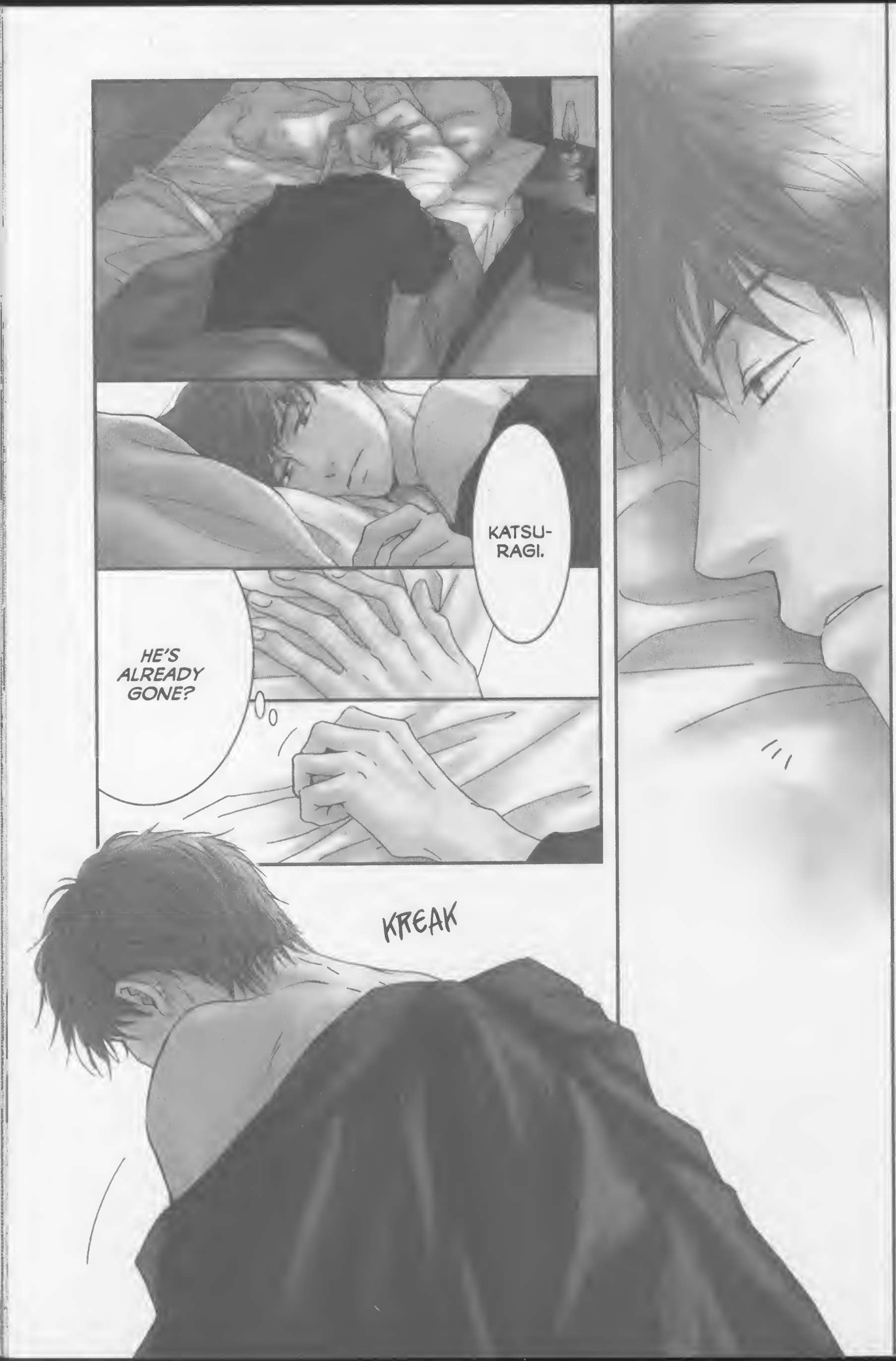

HE HATES CHANGE, BUT...
...HE'LL JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT THESE LITTLE THINGS.
...
DO YOU UNDERSTAND, KATSURAGI?!
GASP
!
...
...
FWP


TAK
ER... SO... WHAT SHALL I DO WITH YOUR OVERCOAT?
TAK
TAK
IT'S FINE.
I'LL DRY IT IN MY ROOM.
VERY GOOD, SIR. THEN I WILL TAKE MY LEAVE OF YOU.
YOUR CORRESPONDENCE IS ON YOUR DESK.
THANK YOU.
SHK
SLAM
!
...
HOW LONG...
...BEFORE HE WAKES UP AS MASTER OF THE HOUSE...
TOSS
SHF
ALWAYS SO FREE LIKE THAT...


ALWAYS...
SOMEHOW MY WAY OF THINKING HAS HAD NO INFLUENCE...
HE HATES CHANGE, BUT...
...HE'LL JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT THESE LITTLE THINGS.
HE ALWAYS JUST SAYS WHATEVER HE WANTS.
EVEN THOUGH HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND A SINGLE THING ABOUT ME.
NOT A SINGLE THING...

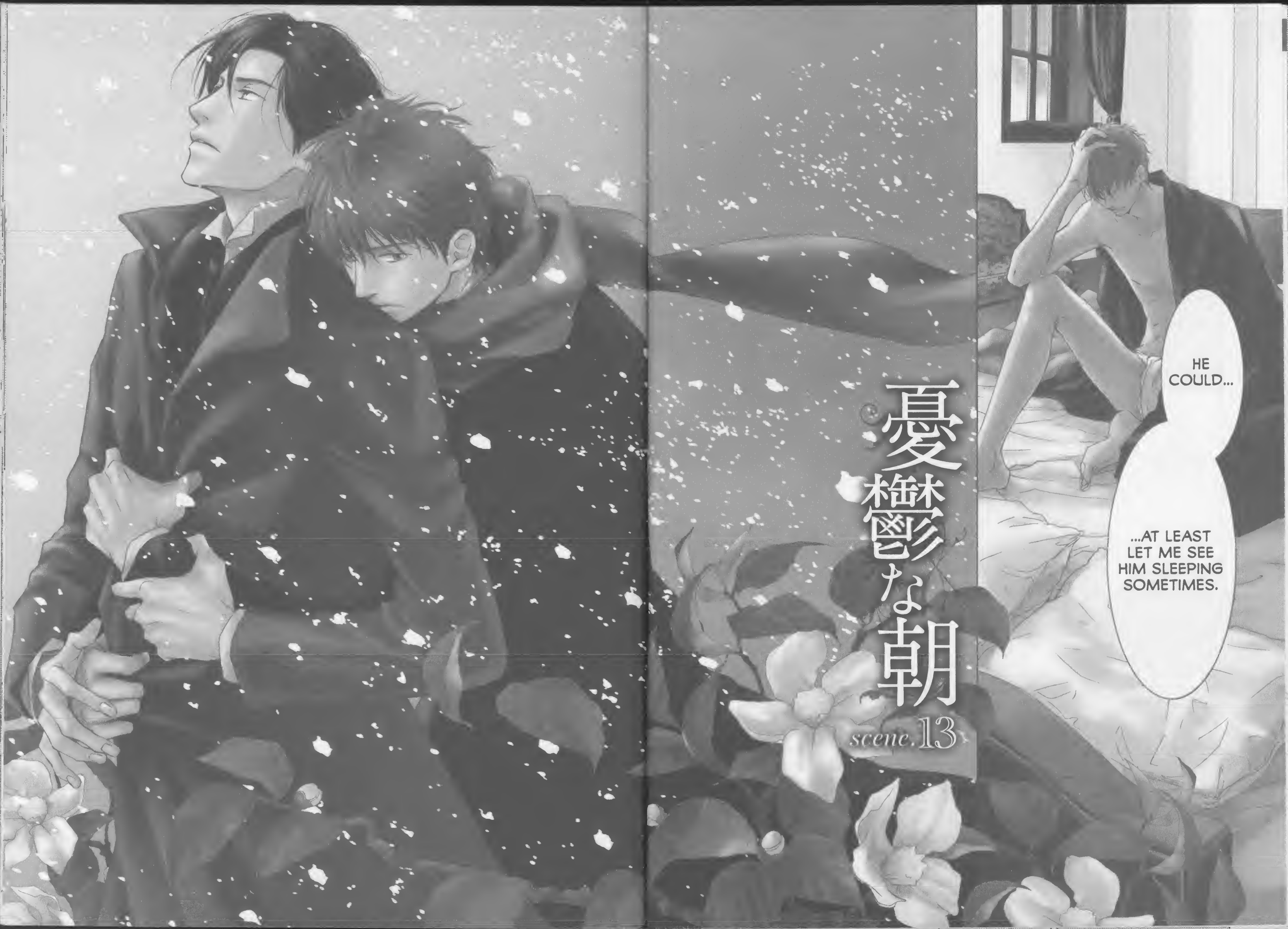

IF ONLY IT WERE SO EASY TO CHANGE JUST LIKE THAT...
HOW MUCH EASIER LIFE WOULD BE...
ALL THAT BEING SAID, THIS BUSINESS WITH HIS LORDSHIP IS A PROBLEM.
TAK
TAK
QUITE SO...
I'VE NO DOUBT THAT I'VE EARNED THE DISPLEASURE OF MASTER KATSURAGI.
I WONDER WHAT HE'LL HAVE TO SAY ABOUT IT LATER...
NOW, NOW. I'LL PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR YOU WITH BOTH HIS LORDSHIP AND MASTER KATSURAGI.

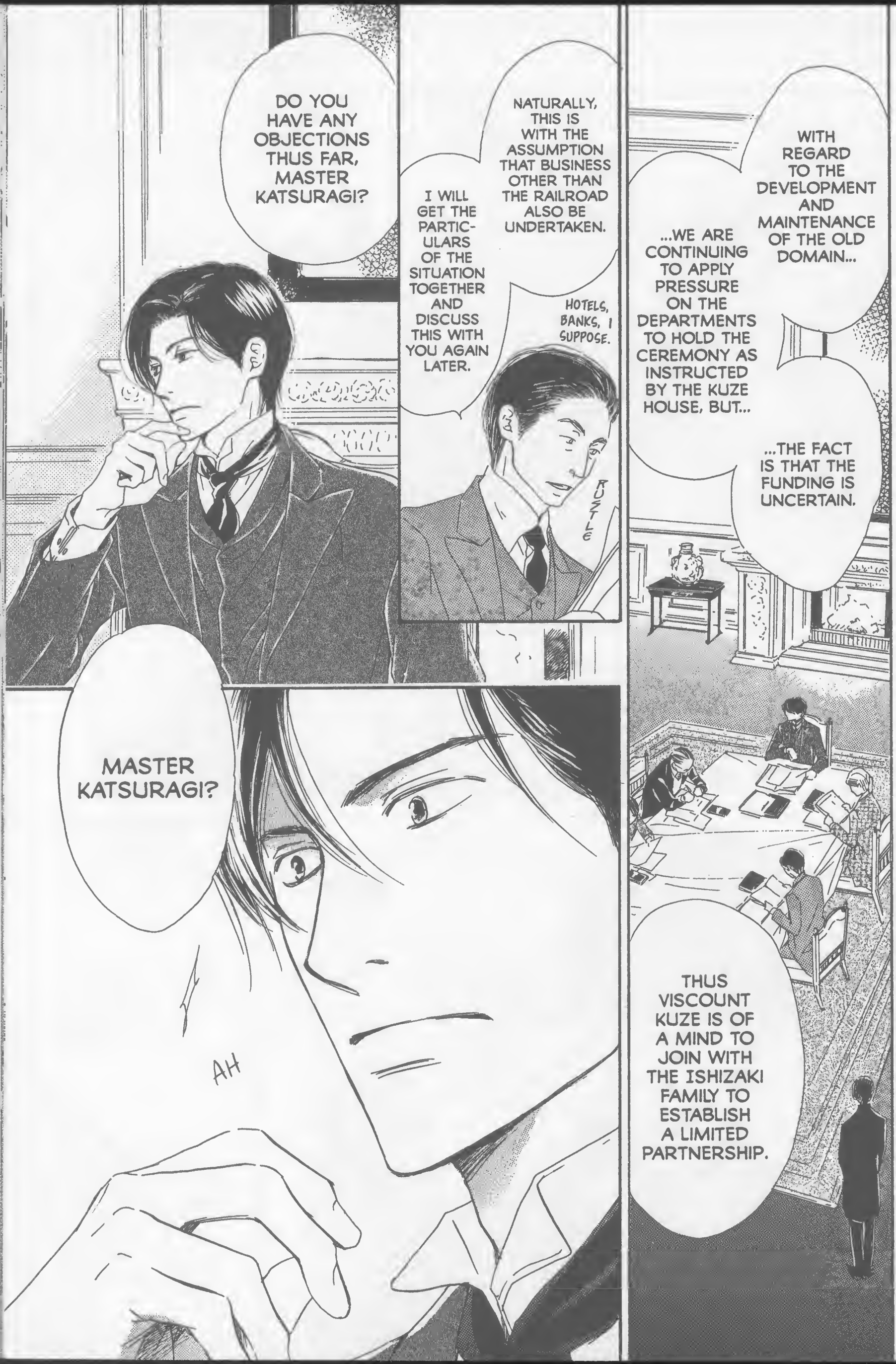

EVEN STILL ...
MASTER AKIHITO REALLY HAS TURNED OUT WONDERFULLY.
WHEN HE WAS A BOY, HE WAS SICKLY, SIMILAR TO HIS MOTHER.
AND HIS FATHER, MASTER AKINAO, PASSED ON WITHOUT GETTING THE CHANCE TO SPEAK MUCH WITH THE BOY.
I'M QUITE CERTAIN NO ONE AT THAT TIME EXPECTED HIM TO BECOME THE YOUNG MAN THAT HE HAS.
NOT HIS PREDECESSOR ...
NOT THE OLD RETAINERS ...
AND NOT MASTER KATSURAGI.
scene.12 END


KATSU-RAGI.
HE'S ALREADY GONE?
KREAK

Blue Morning

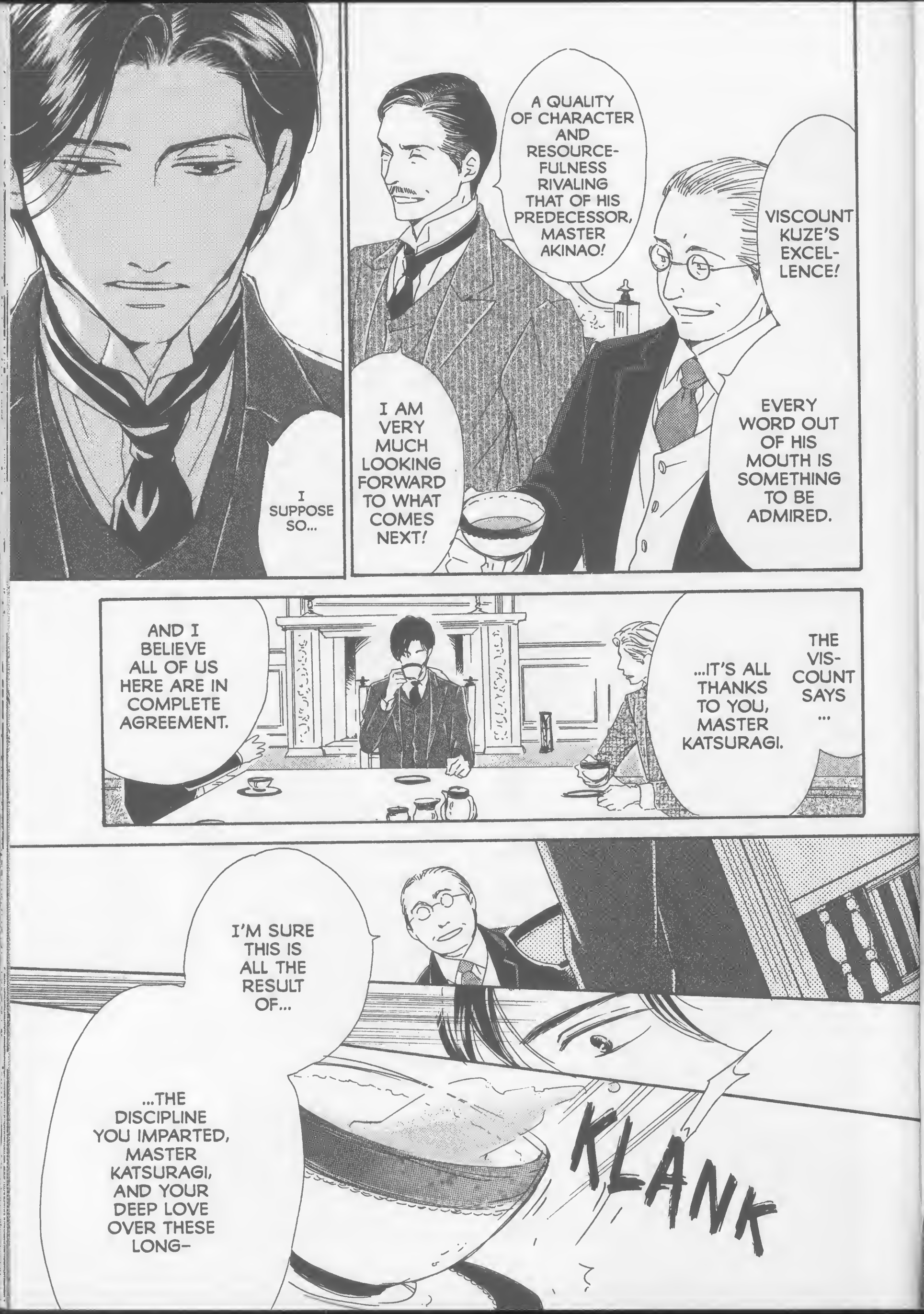
憂鬱な朝

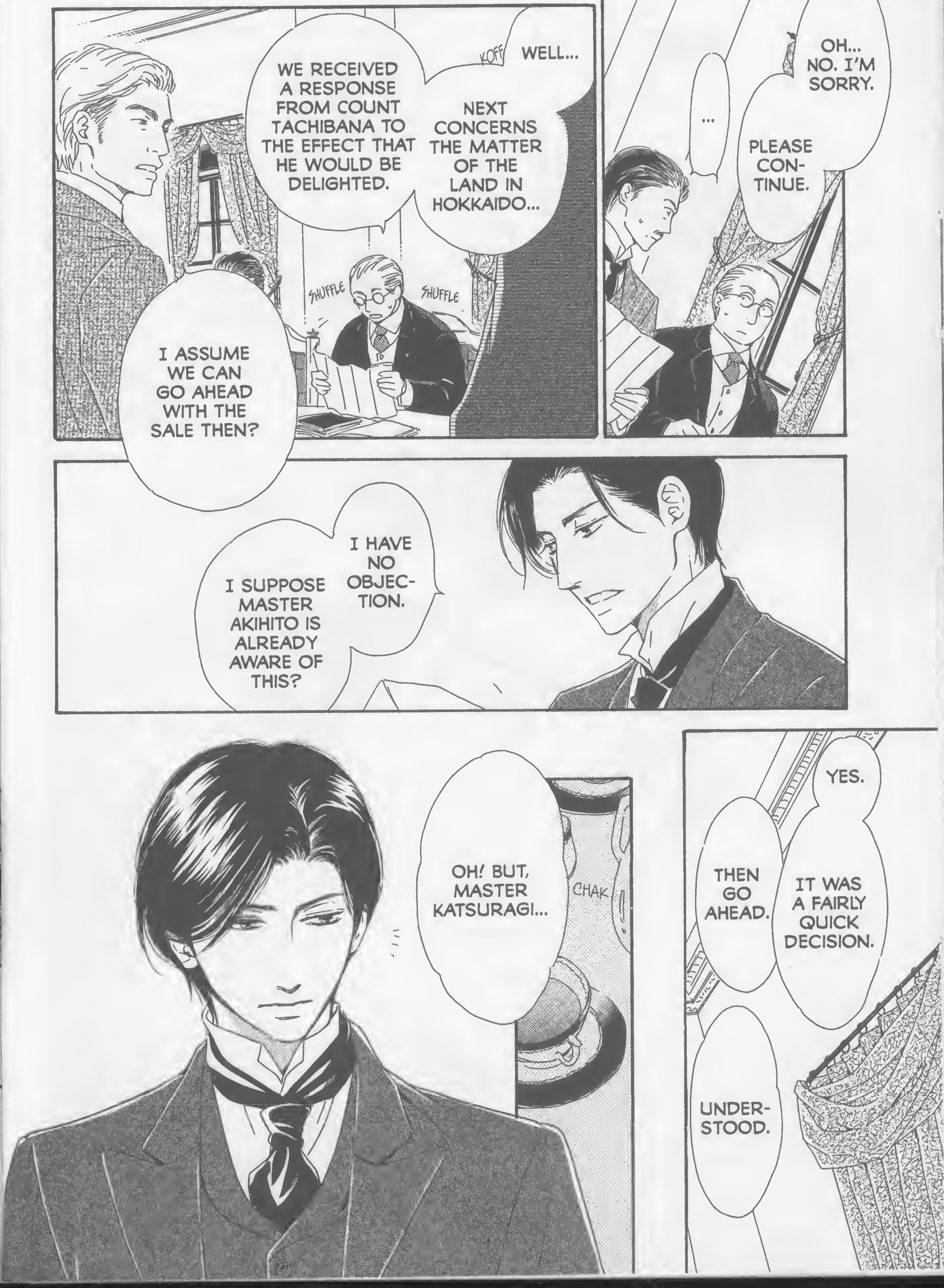

HE COULD...
...AT LEAST LET ME SEE HIM SLEEPING SOMETIMES.
憂鬱な朝
scene.13

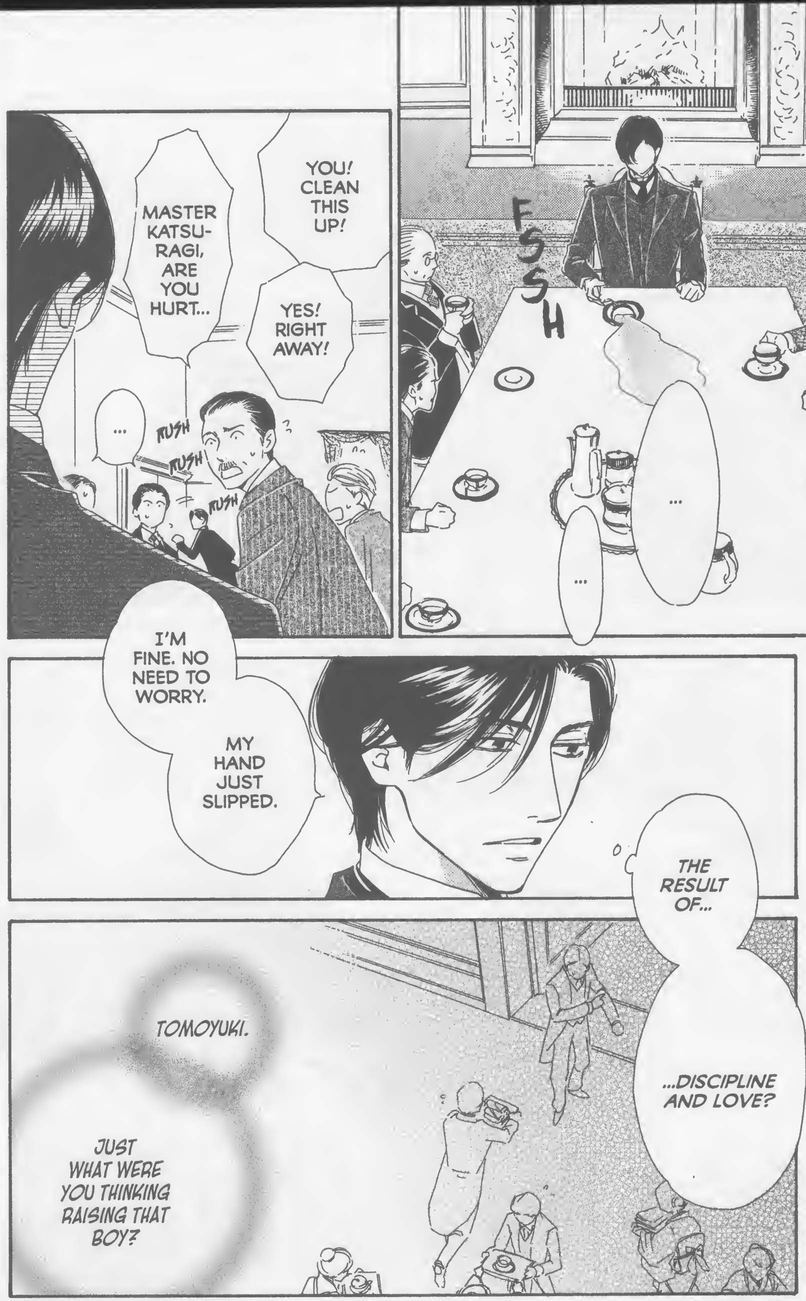

WITH REGARD TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE OLD DOMAIN...
...WE ARE CONTINUING TO APPLY PRESSURE ON THE DEPARTMENTS TO HOLD THE CEREMONY AS INSTRUCTED BY THE KUZE HOUSE, BUT...
...THE FACT IS THAT THE FUNDING IS UNCERTAIN.
THUS VISCOUNT KUZE IS OF A MIND TO JOIN WITH THE ISHIZAKI FAMILY TO ESTABLISH A LIMITED PARTNERSHIP.
NATURALLY, THIS IS WITH THE ASSUMPTION THAT BUSINESS OTHER THAN THE RAILROAD ALSO BE UNDERTAKEN.
I WILL GET THE PARTICULARS OF THE SITUATION TOGETHER AND DISCUSS THIS WITH YOU AGAIN LATER.
HOTELS, BANKS, I SUPPOSE.
RUSTLE
DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTIONS THUS FAR, MASTER KATSURAGI?
MASTER KATSURAGI?
AH

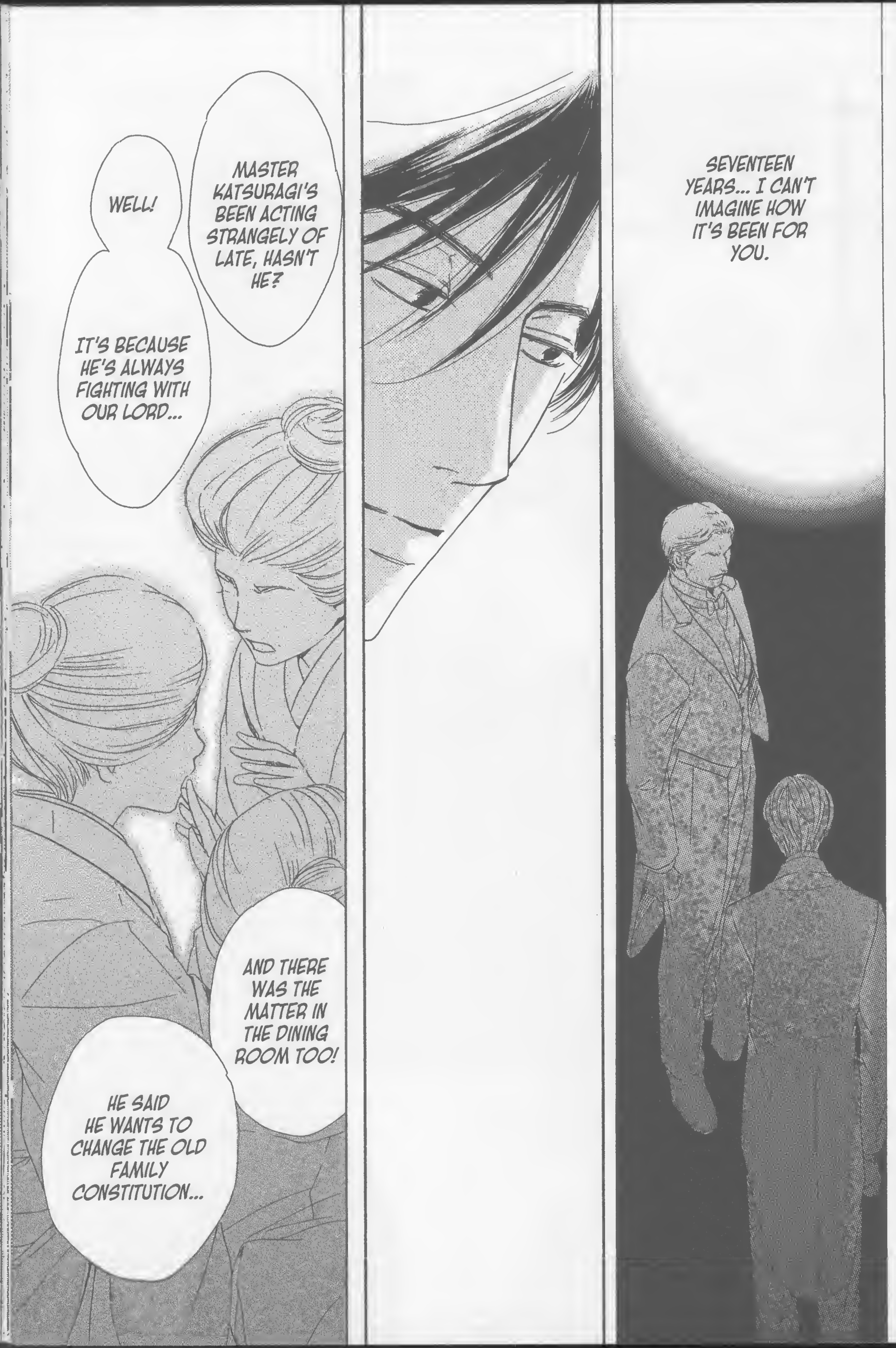
Blue Morning

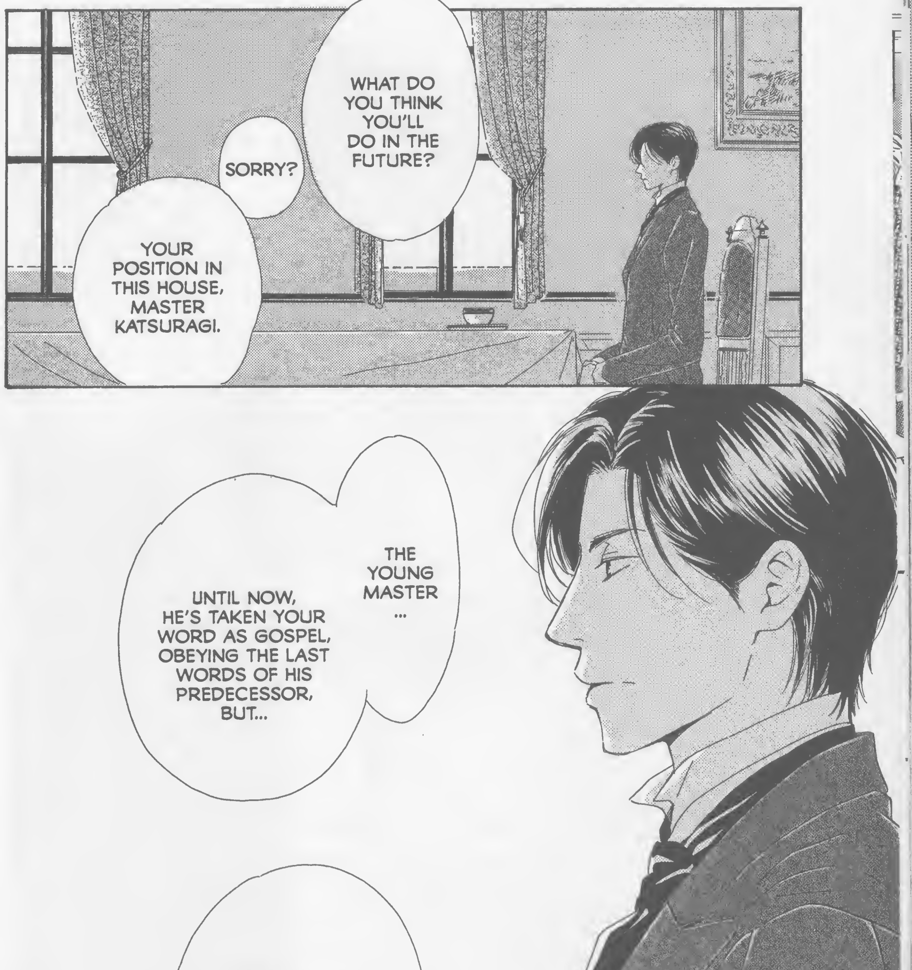
憂鬱な朝

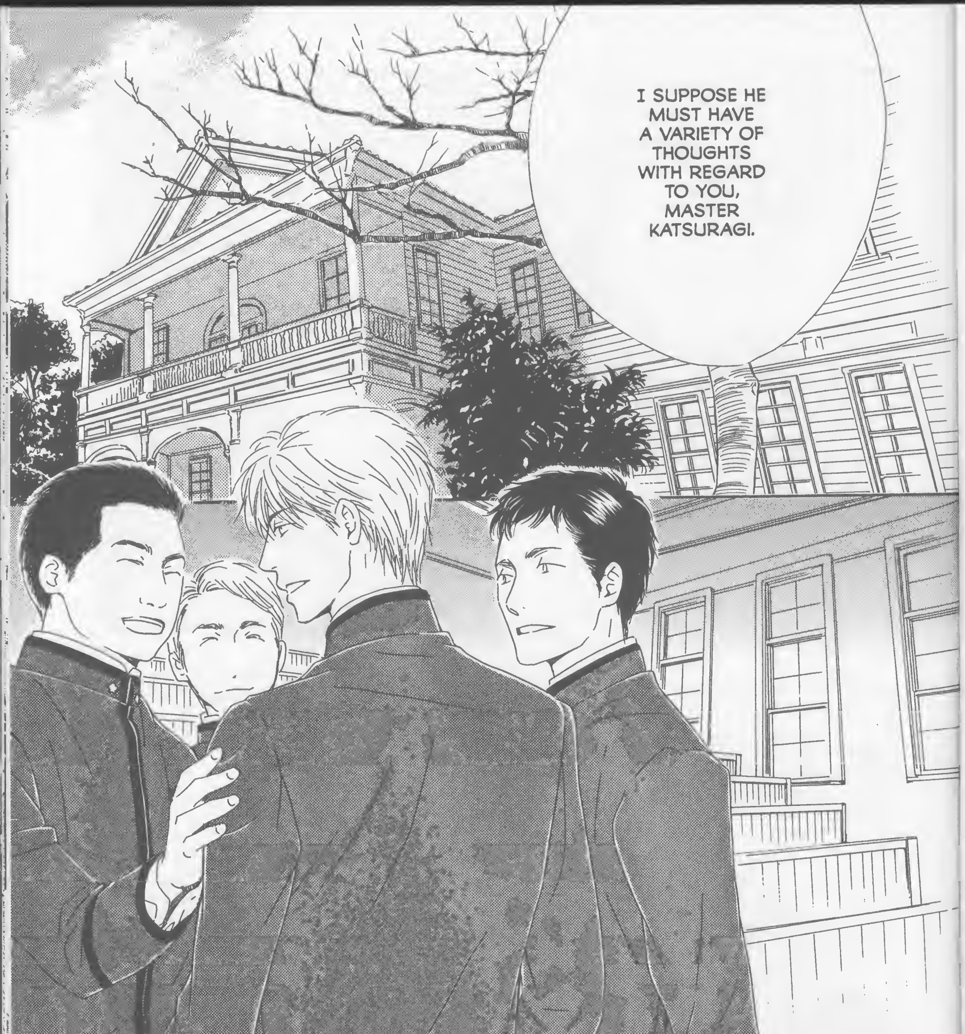

VISCOUNT KUZE'S EXCELLENCE!
A QUALITY OF CHARACTER AND RESOURCEFULNESS RIVALING THAT OF HIS PREDECESSOR, MASTER AKINAO!
EVERY WORD OUT OF HIS MOUTH IS SOMETHING TO BE ADMIRED.
I AM VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO WHAT COMES NEXT!
I SUPPOSE SO...
THE VISCOUNT SAYS ...
...IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU, MASTER KATSURAGI.
AND I BELIEVE ALL OF US HERE ARE IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT.
I'M SURE THIS IS ALL THE RESULT OF...
...THE DISCIPLINE YOU IMPARTED, MASTER KATSURAGI, AND YOUR DEEP LOVE OVER THESE LONG-
KLANK

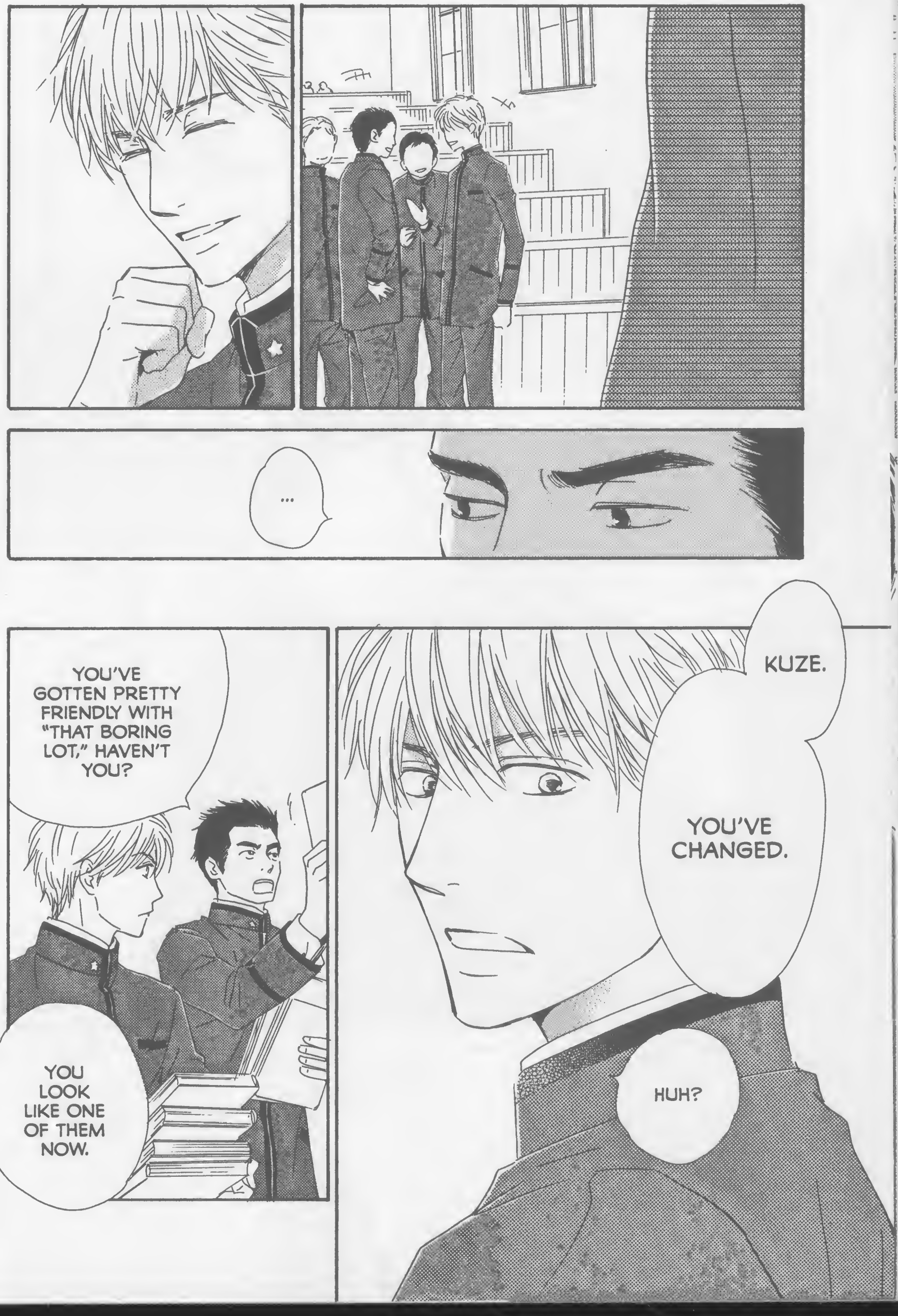

OH... NO. I'M SORRY.
...
PLEASE CONTINUE.
KOFF
WELL...
NEXT CONCERNS THE MATTER OF THE LAND IN HOKKAIDO...
WE RECEIVED A RESPONSE FROM COUNT TACHIBANA TO THE EFFECT THAT HE WOULD BE DELIGHTED.
SHUFFLE
SHUFFLE
I ASSUME WE CAN GO AHEAD WITH THE SALE THEN?
I HAVE NO OBJECTION.
I SUPPOSE MASTER AKIHITO IS ALREADY AWARE OF THIS?
YES.
IT WAS A FAIRLY QUICK DECISION.
THEN GO AHEAD.
UNDERSTOOD.
CHAK
OH! BUT, MASTER KATSURAGI...

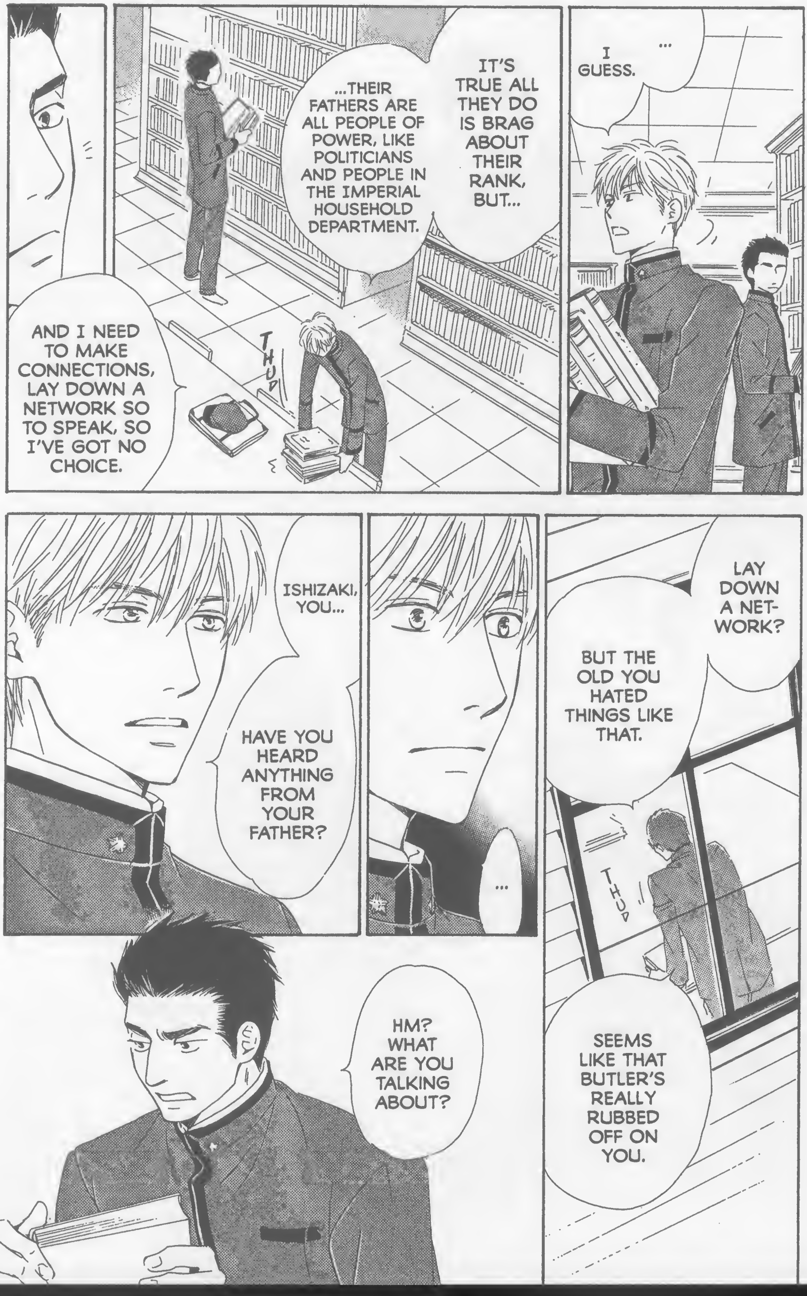

F S S H
...
...
YOU! CLEAN THIS UP!
MASTER KATSU-RAGI, ARE YOU HURT...
YES! RIGHT AWAY!
...
RUSH
RUSH
RUSH
I'M FINE. NO NEED TO WORRY.
MY HAND JUST SLIPPED.
THE RESULT OF...
...DISCIPLINE AND LOVE?
TOMOYUKI.
JUST WHAT WERE YOU THINKING RAISING THAT BOY?

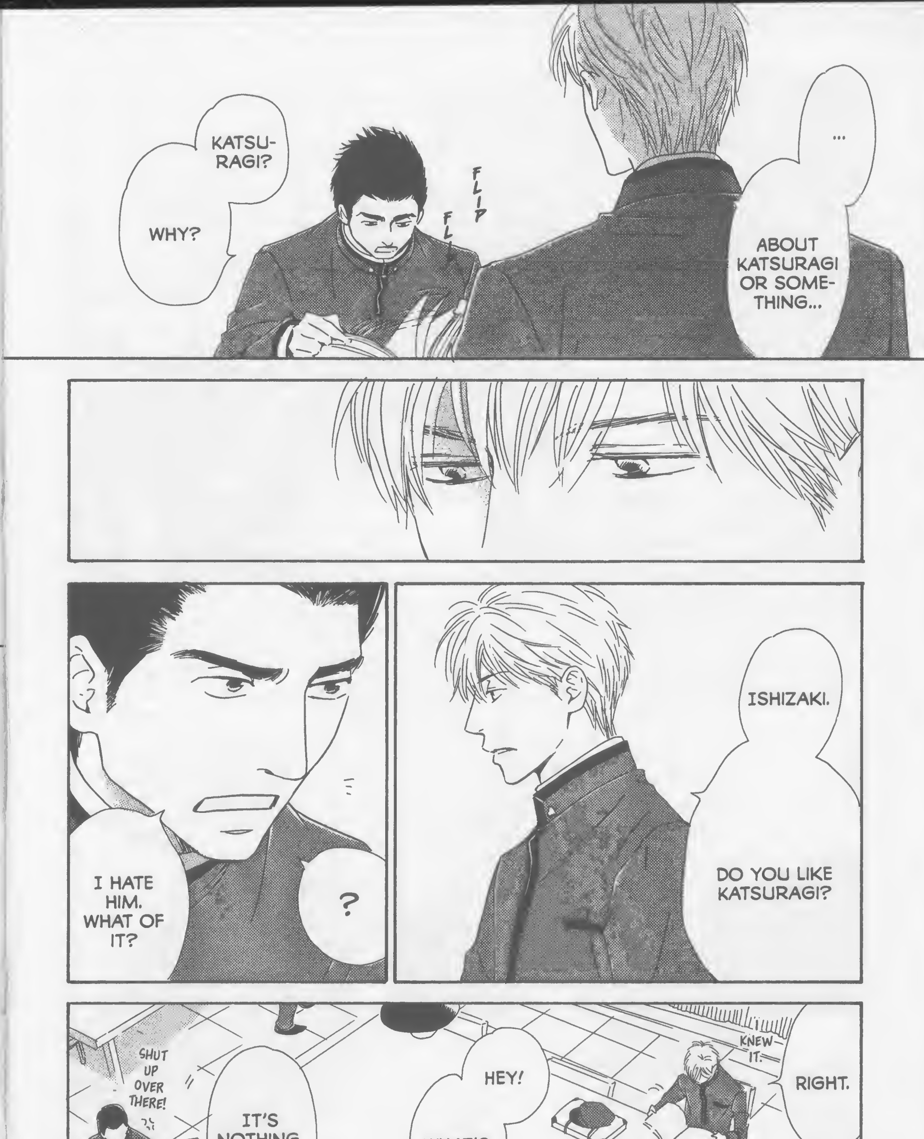

SEVENTEEN YEARS... I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW IT'S BEEN FOR YOU.
MASTER KATSURAGI'S BEEN ACTING STRANGELY OF LATE, HASN'T HE?
WELL!
IT'S BECAUSE HE'S ALWAYS FIGHTING WITH OUR LORD...
AND THERE WAS THE MATTER IN THE DINING ROOM TOO!
HE SAID HE WANTS TO CHANGE THE OLD FAMILY CONSTITUTION...

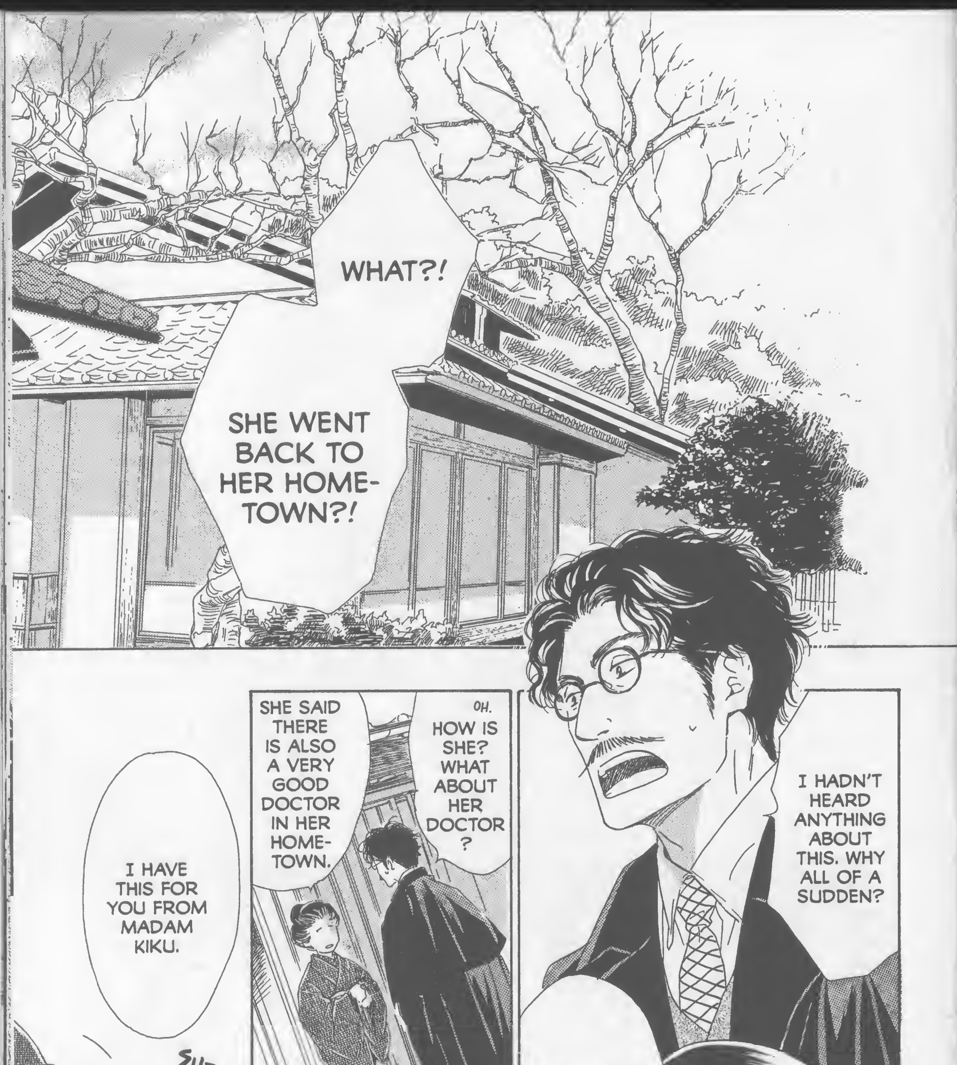

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'LL DO IN THE FUTURE?
SORRY?
YOUR POSITION IN THIS HOUSE, MASTER KATSURAGI.
THE YOUNG MASTER ...
UNTIL NOW, HE'S TAKEN YOUR WORD AS GOSPEL, OBEYING THE LAST WORDS OF HIS PREDECESSOR, BUT...
...HE'S ALREADY MORE THAN READY TO ACT AS THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

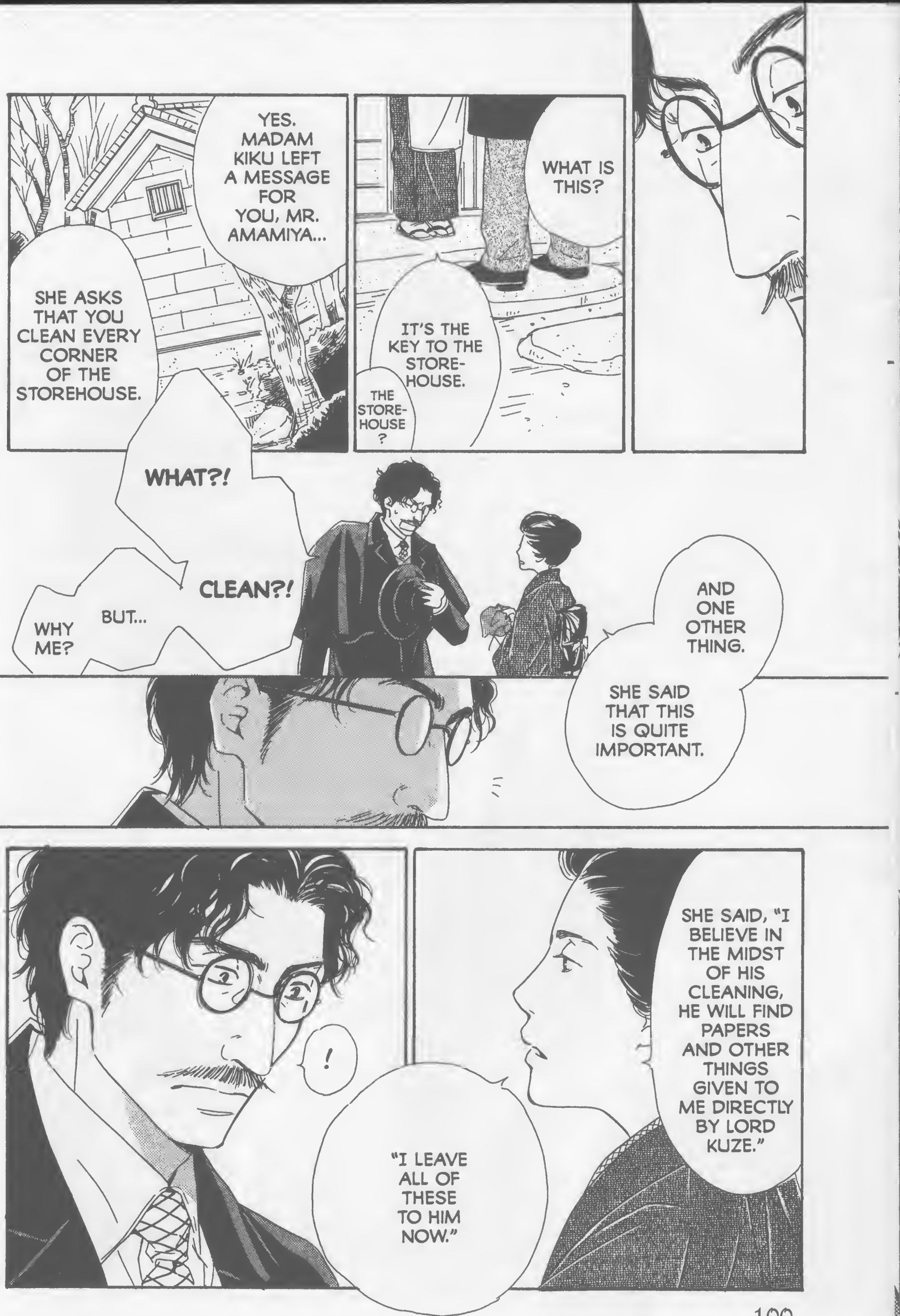

I SUPPOSE HE MUST HAVE A VARIETY OF THOUGHTS WITH REGARD TO YOU, MASTER KATSURAGI.
KACHAK
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA

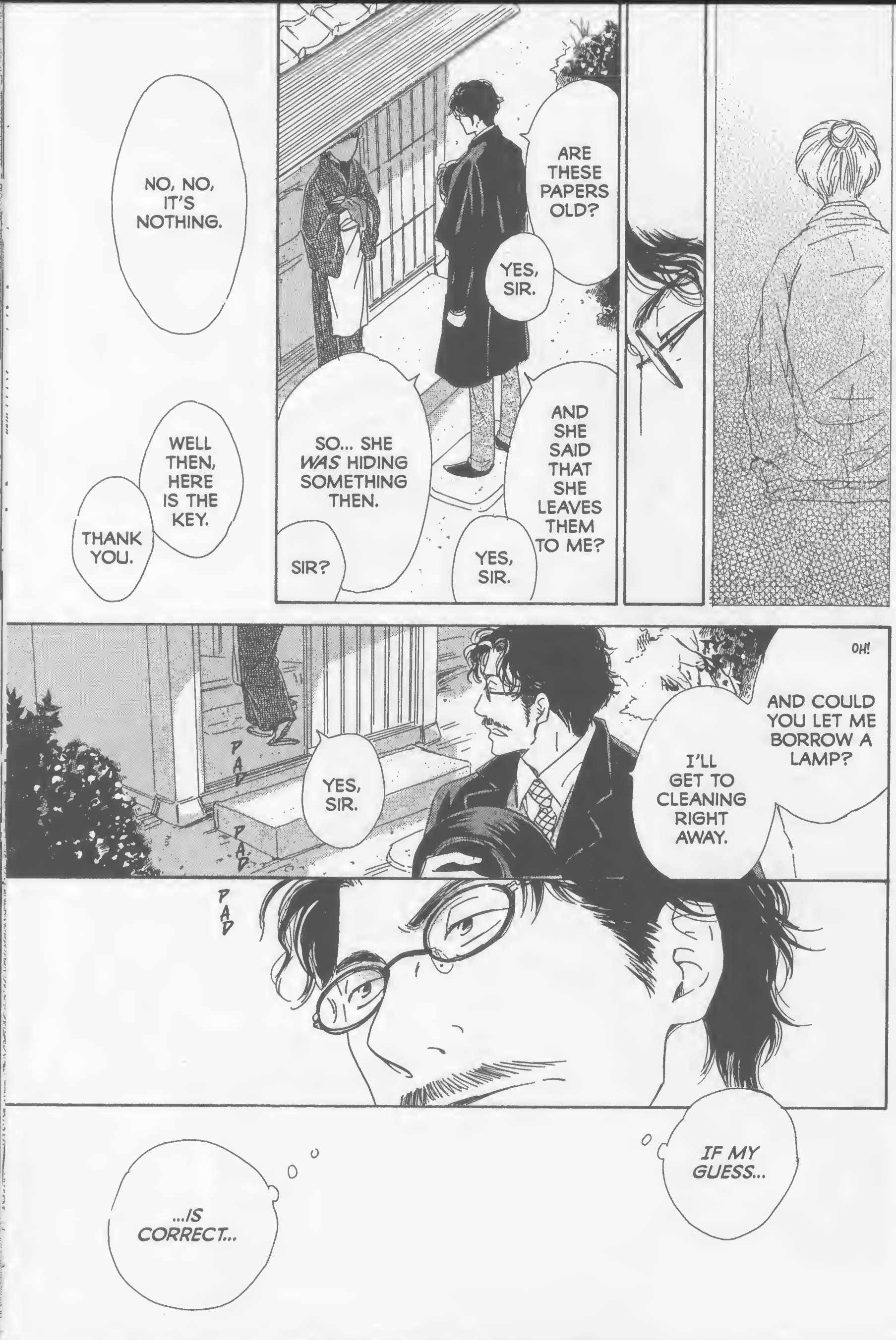

...
KUZE.
YOU'VE CHANGED.
HUH?
YOU'VE GOTTEN PRETTY FRIENDLY WITH "THAT BORING LOT," HAVEN'T YOU?
YOU LOOK LIKE ONE OF THEM NOW.

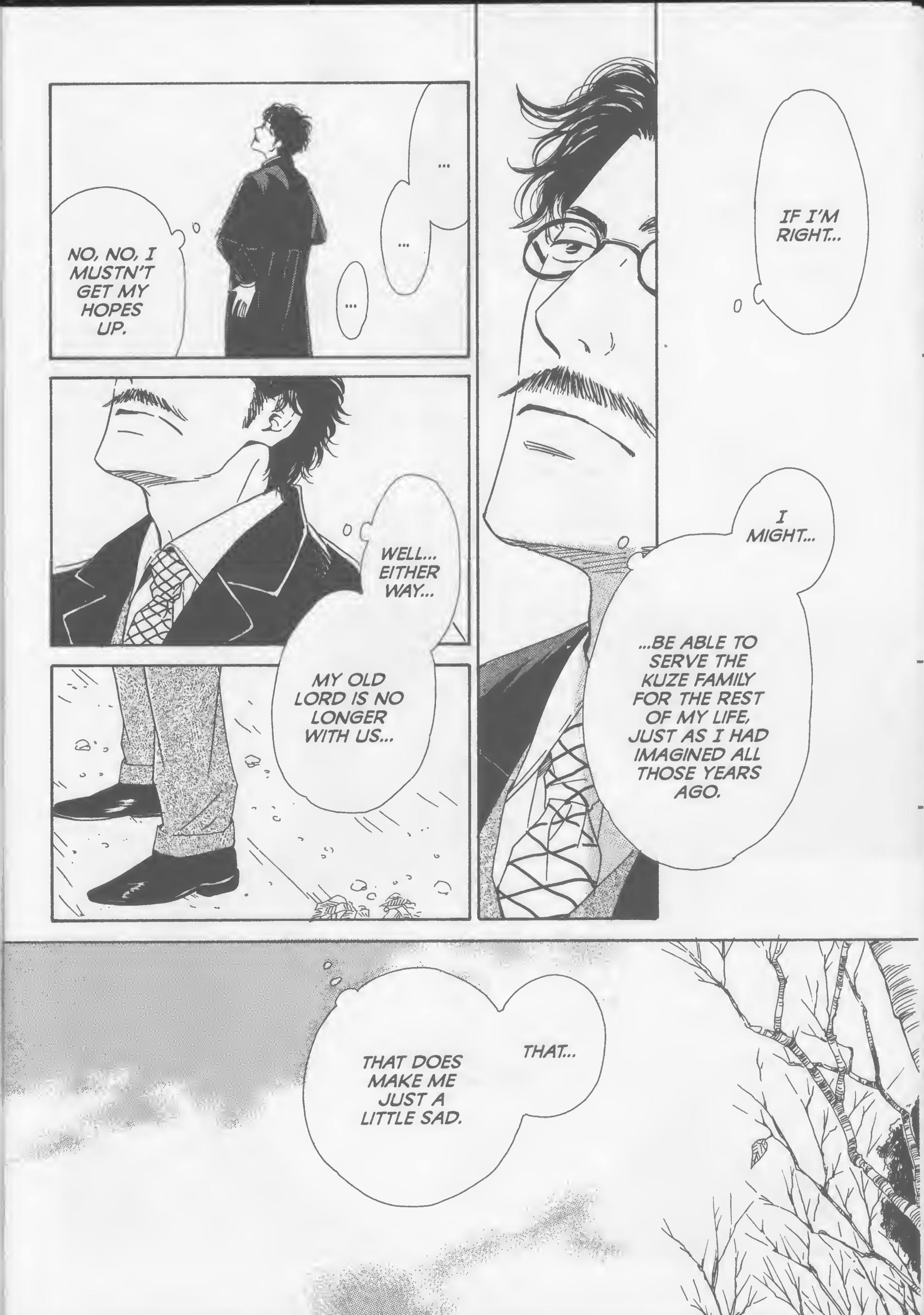

...
I GUESS.
IT'S TRUE ALL THEY DO IS BRAG ABOUT THEIR RANK, BUT...
...THEIR FATHERS ARE ALL PEOPLE OF POWER, LIKE POLITICIANS AND PEOPLE IN THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT.
THUD
AND I NEED TO MAKE CONNECTIONS, LAY DOWN A NETWORK SO TO SPEAK, SO I'VE GOT NO CHOICE.
LAY DOWN A NET-WORK?
BUT THE OLD YOU HATED THINGS LIKE THAT.
THUD
SEEMS LIKE THAT BUTLER'S REALLY RUBBED OFF ON YOU.
...
ISHIZAKI, YOU...
HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING FROM YOUR FATHER?
HM? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

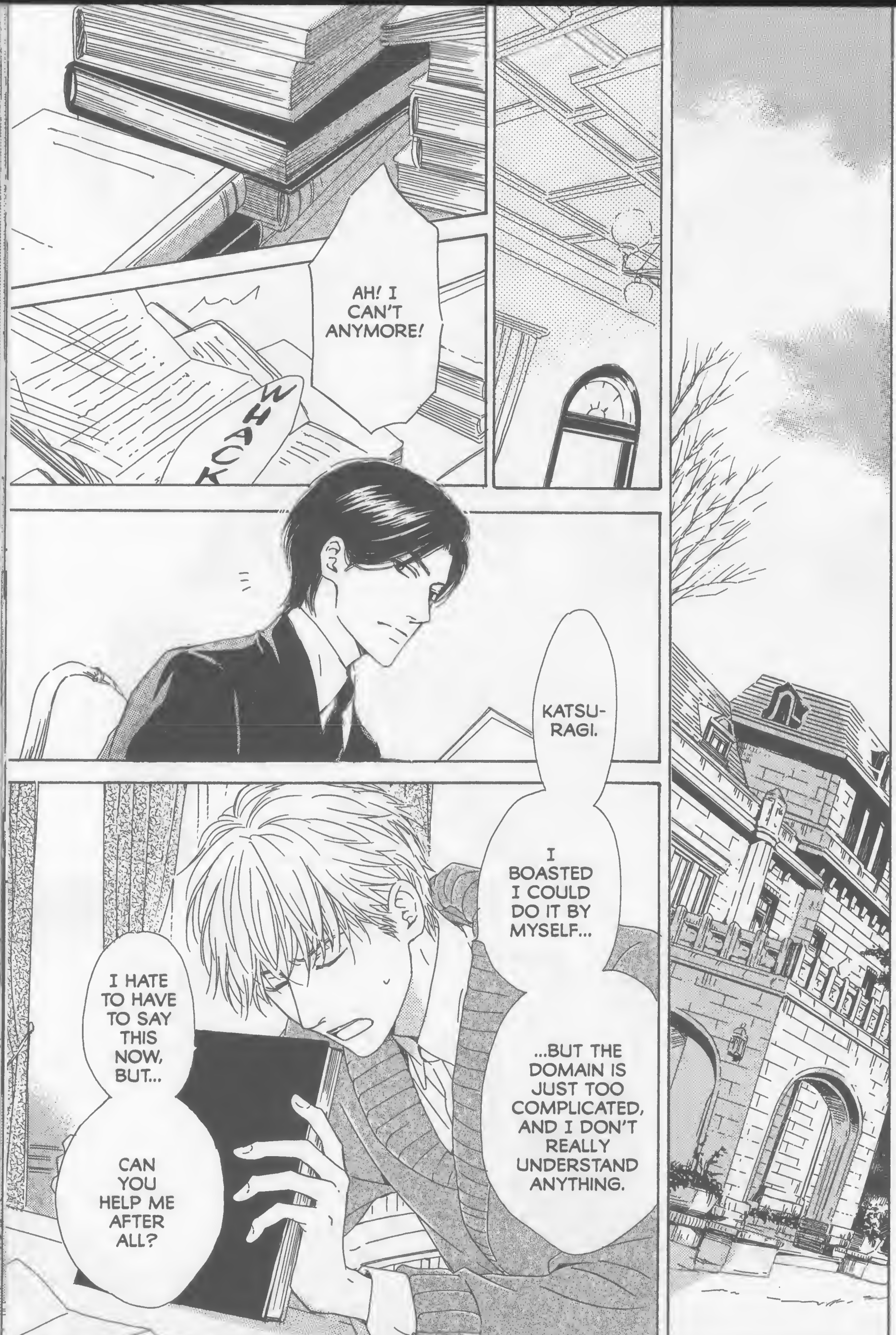

...
ABOUT KATSURAGI OR SOMETHING...
KATSURAGI?
WHY?
FLIP
FLIP
ISHIZAKI.
DO YOU LIKE KATSURAGI?
?
I HATE HIM. WHAT OF IT?
KNEW IT.
RIGHT.
HEY!
WHAT'S UP?
IT'S NOTHING.
SHUT UP OVER THERE!
WHAT IS IT?!

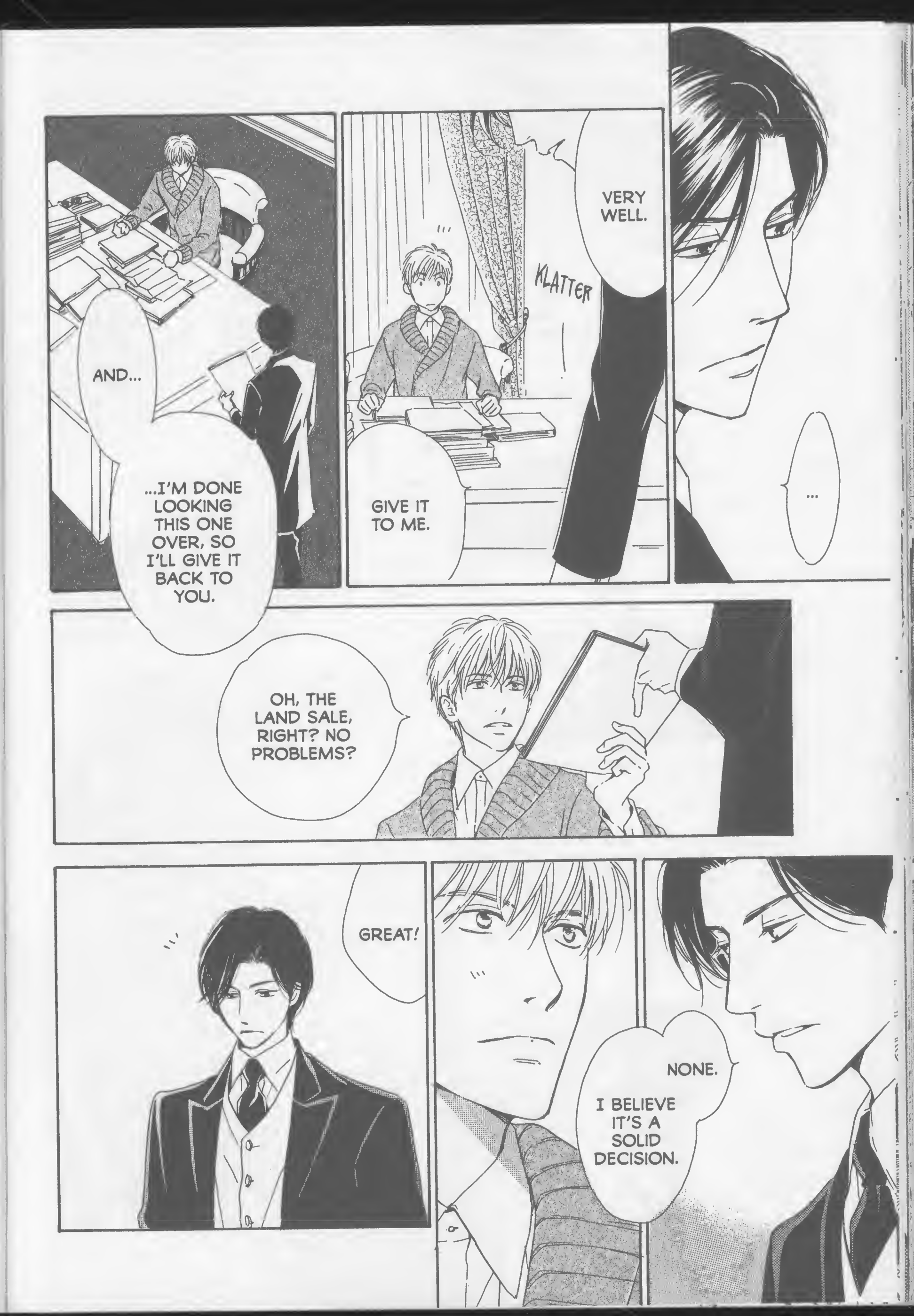

WHAT?!
SHE WENT BACK TO HER HOMETOWN?!
I HADN'T HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT THIS. WHY ALL OF A SUDDEN?
SHE SAID SHE WANTED TO GET AWAY FROM TOKYO FOR A WHILE TO CONVALESCE...
OH. HOW IS SHE? WHAT ABOUT HER DOCTOR?
SHE SAID THERE IS ALSO A VERY GOOD DOCTOR IN HER HOMETOWN.
ER... AND WELL, MR. AMAMIYA...
I HAVE THIS FOR YOU FROM MADAM KIKU.
SHF

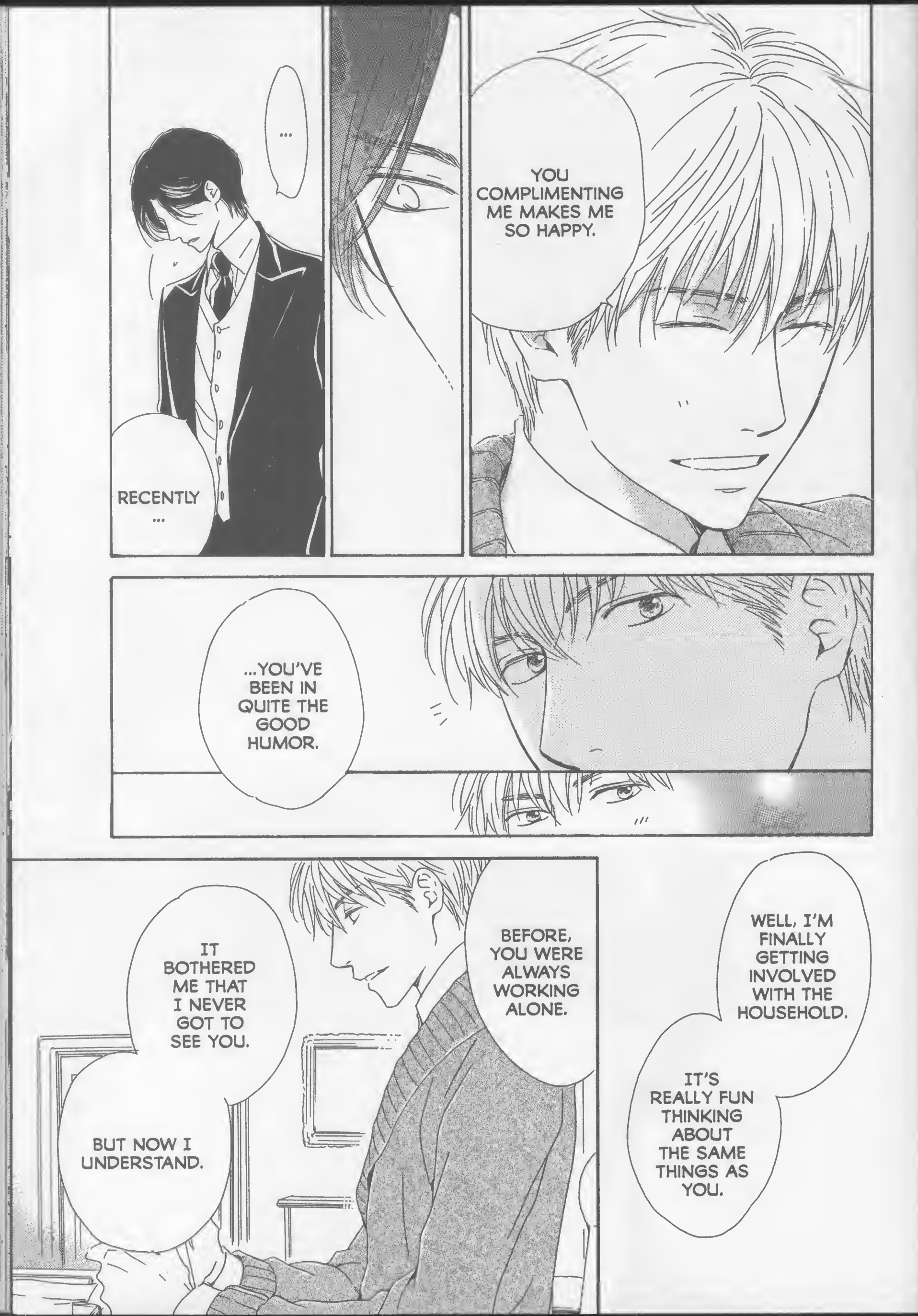

WHAT IS THIS?
IT'S THE KEY TO THE STOREHOUSE.
THE STOREHOUSE?
YES. MADAM KIKU LEFT A MESSAGE FOR YOU, MR. AMAMIYA...
SHE ASKS THAT YOU CLEAN EVERY CORNER OF THE STOREHOUSE.
WHAT?!
CLEAN?!
BUT...
WHY ME?
AND ONE OTHER THING.
SHE SAID THAT THIS IS QUITE IMPORTANT.
SHE SAID, "I BELIEVE IN THE MIDST OF HIS CLEANING, HE WILL FIND PAPERS AND OTHER THINGS GIVEN TO ME DIRECTLY BY LORD KUZE."
"I LEAVE ALL OF THESE TO HIM NOW."
!

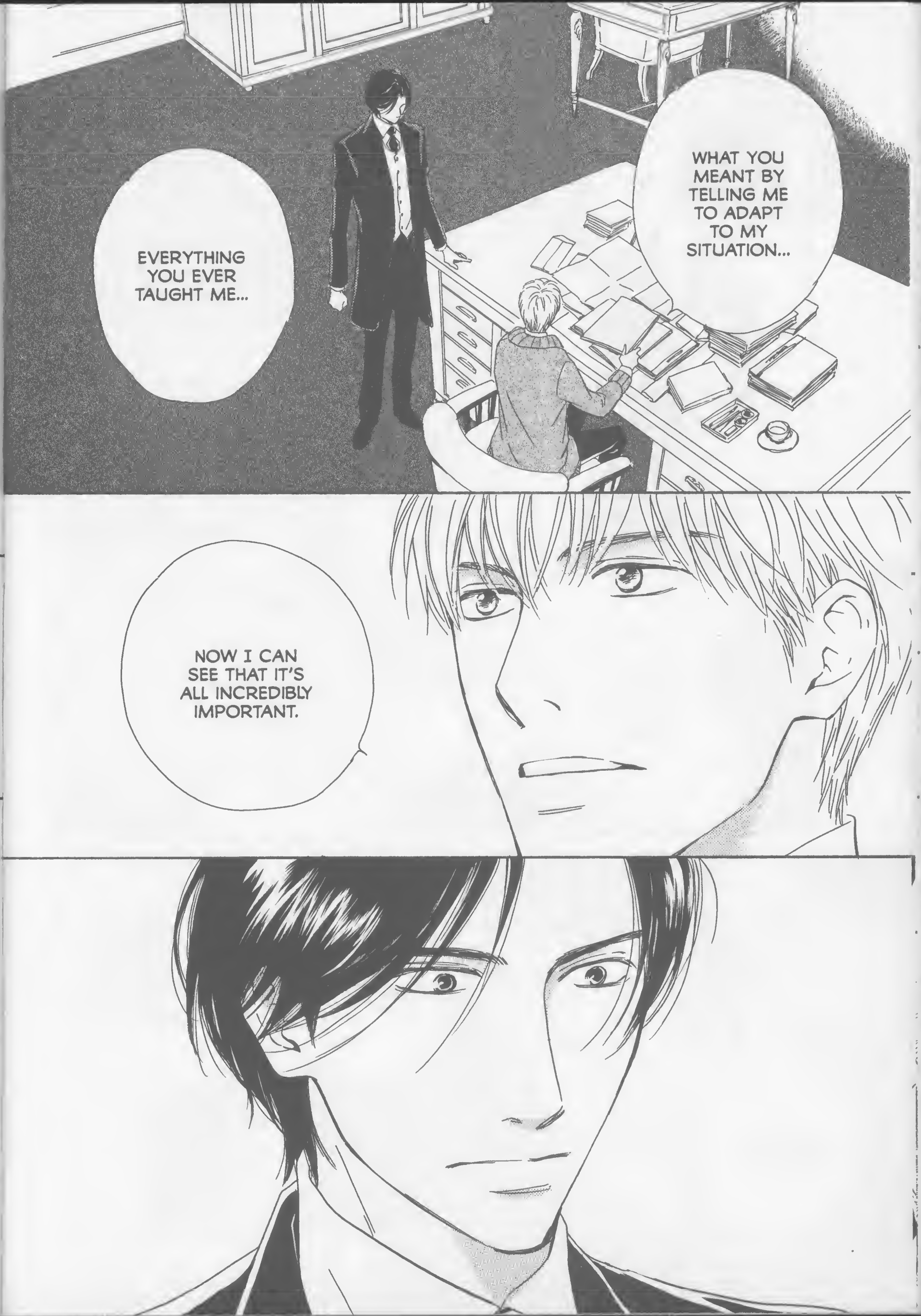

ARE THESE PAPERS OLD?
YES, SIR.
AND SHE SAID THAT SHE LEAVES THEM TO ME?
YES, SIR.
SO... SHE *WAS* HIDING SOMETHING THEN.
SIR?
NO, NO, IT'S NOTHING.
WELL THEN, HERE IS THE KEY.
THANK YOU.
OH!
AND COULD YOU LET ME BORROW A LAMP?
I'LL GET TO CLEANING RIGHT AWAY.
YES, SIR.
PAD
PAD
PAD
PAD
IF MY GUESS...
...IS CORRECT...

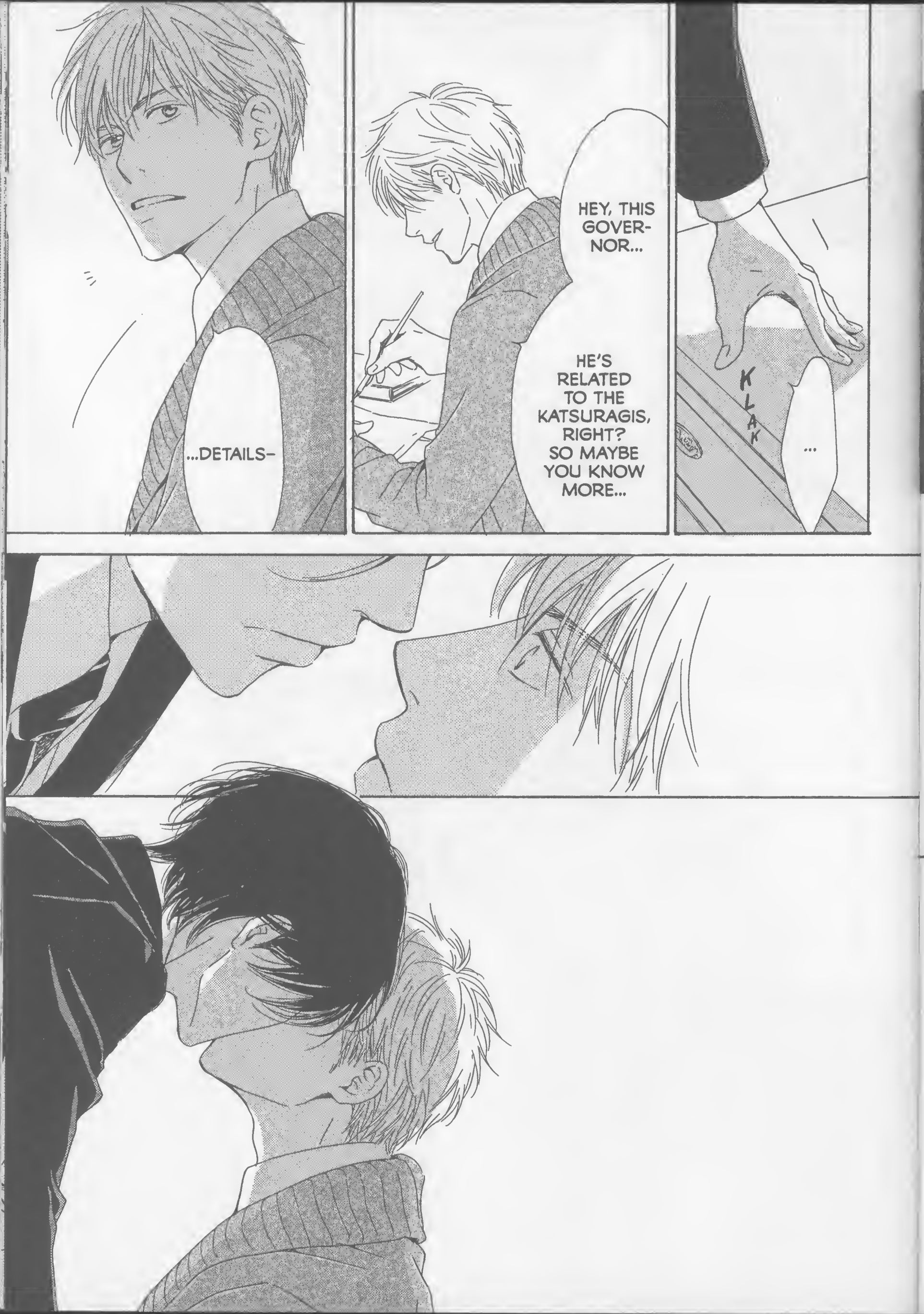

IF I'M RIGHT...
I MIGHT...
...BE ABLE TO SERVE THE KUZE FAMILY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE, JUST AS I HAD IMAGINED ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.
...
...
...
NO, NO, I MUSTN'T GET MY HOPES UP.
WELL... EITHER WAY...
MY OLD LORD IS NO LONGER WITH US...
THAT...
THAT DOES MAKE ME JUST A LITTLE SAD.

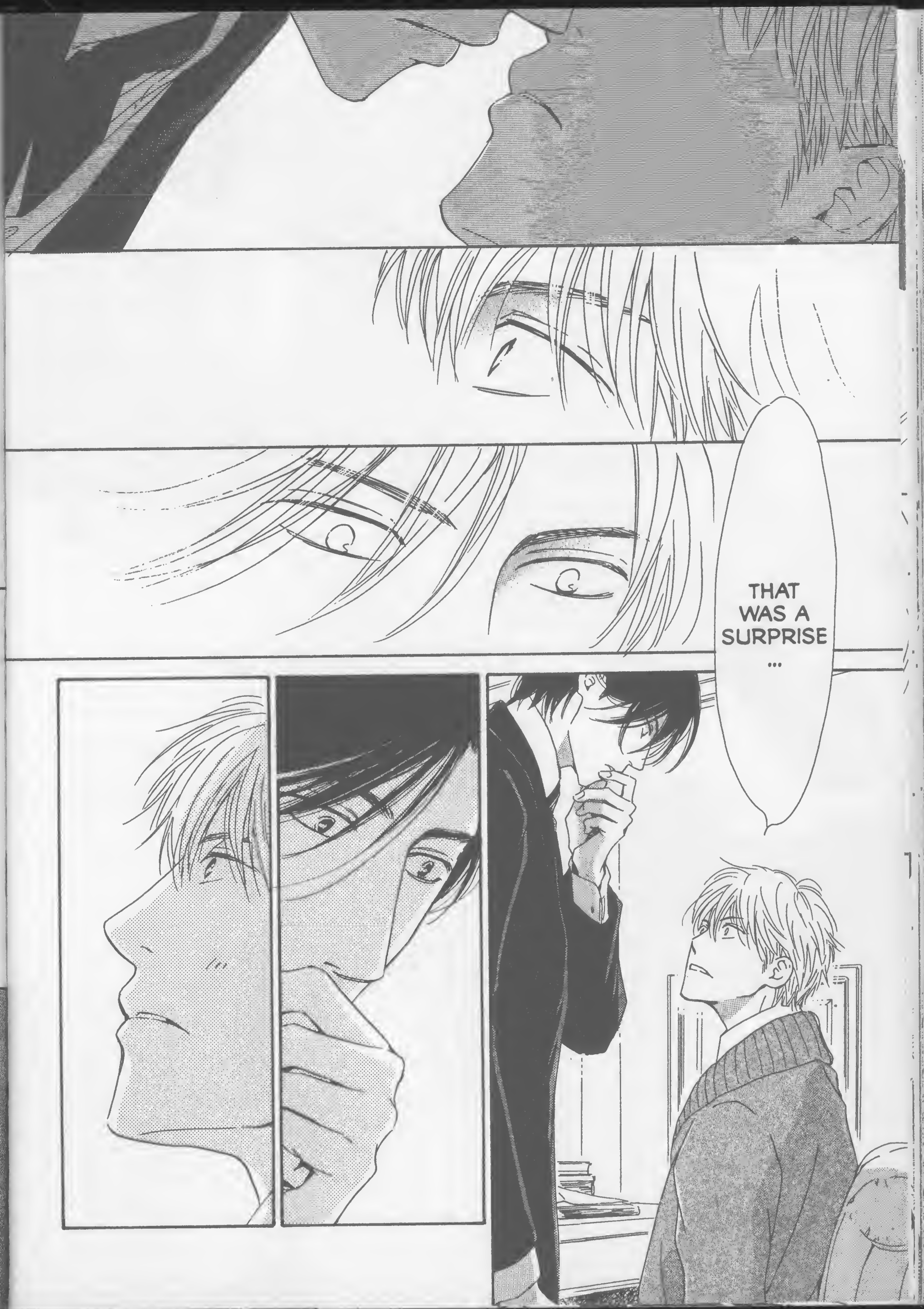

AH! I CAN'T ANYMORE!
WHACK
KATSURAGI.
I BOASTED I COULD DO IT BY MYSELF...
...BUT THE DOMAIN IS JUST TOO COMPLICATED, AND I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND ANYTHING.
I HATE TO HAVE TO SAY THIS NOW, BUT...
CAN YOU HELP ME AFTER ALL?

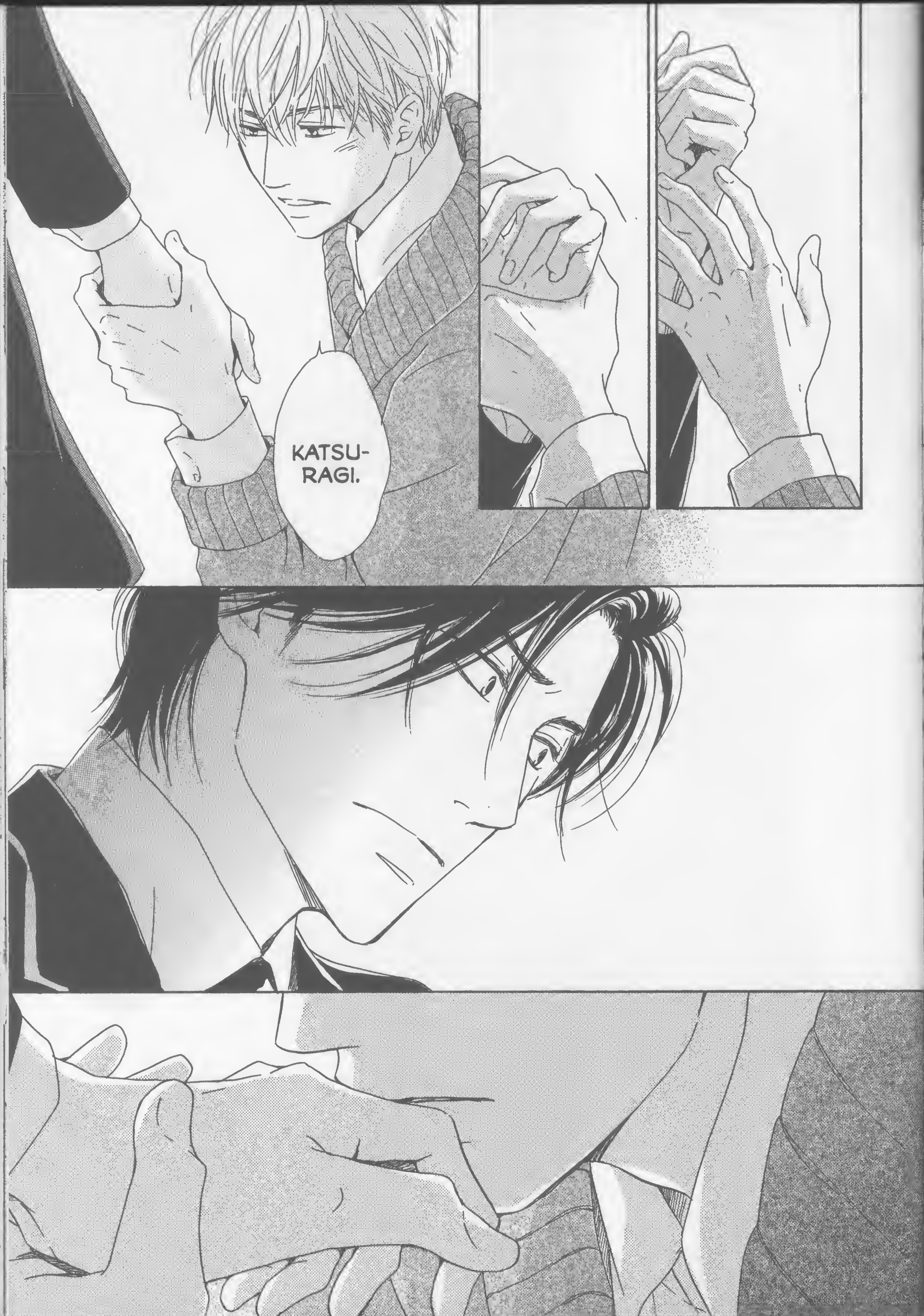

VERY WELL.
...
KLATTER
GIVE IT TO ME.
AND...
...I'M DONE LOOKING THIS ONE OVER, SO I'LL GIVE IT BACK TO YOU.
OH, THE LAND SALE, RIGHT? NO PROBLEMS?
NONE.
I BELIEVE IT'S A SOLID DECISION.
GREAT!

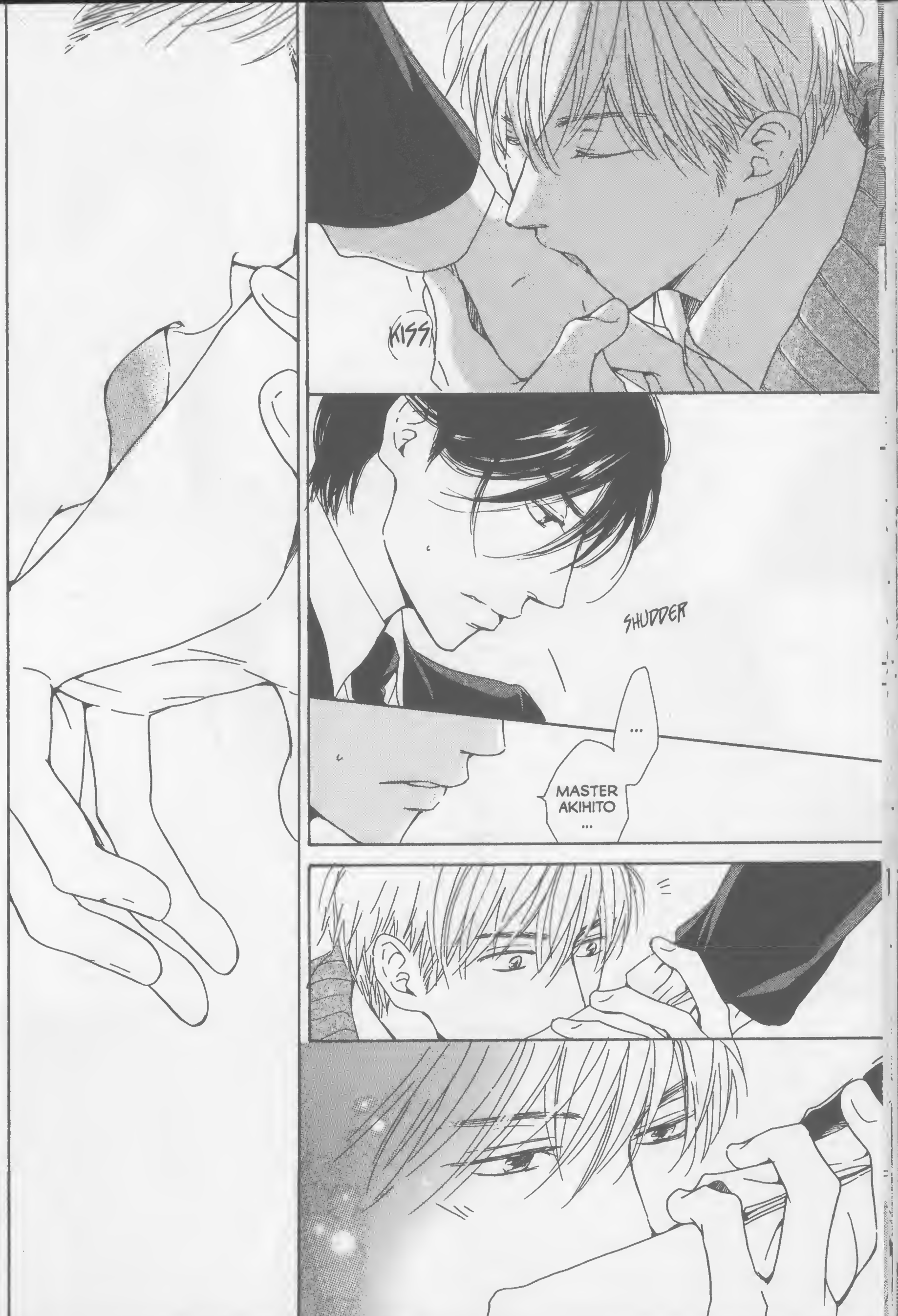

YOU COMPLIMENTING ME MAKES ME SO HAPPY.
...
RECENTLY ...
...YOU'VE BEEN IN QUITE THE GOOD HUMOR.
WELL, I'M FINALLY GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE HOUSEHOLD.
IT'S REALLY FUN THINKING ABOUT THE SAME THINGS AS YOU.
BEFORE, YOU WERE ALWAYS WORKING ALONE.
IT BOTHERED ME THAT I NEVER GOT TO SEE YOU.
BUT NOW I UNDERSTAND.

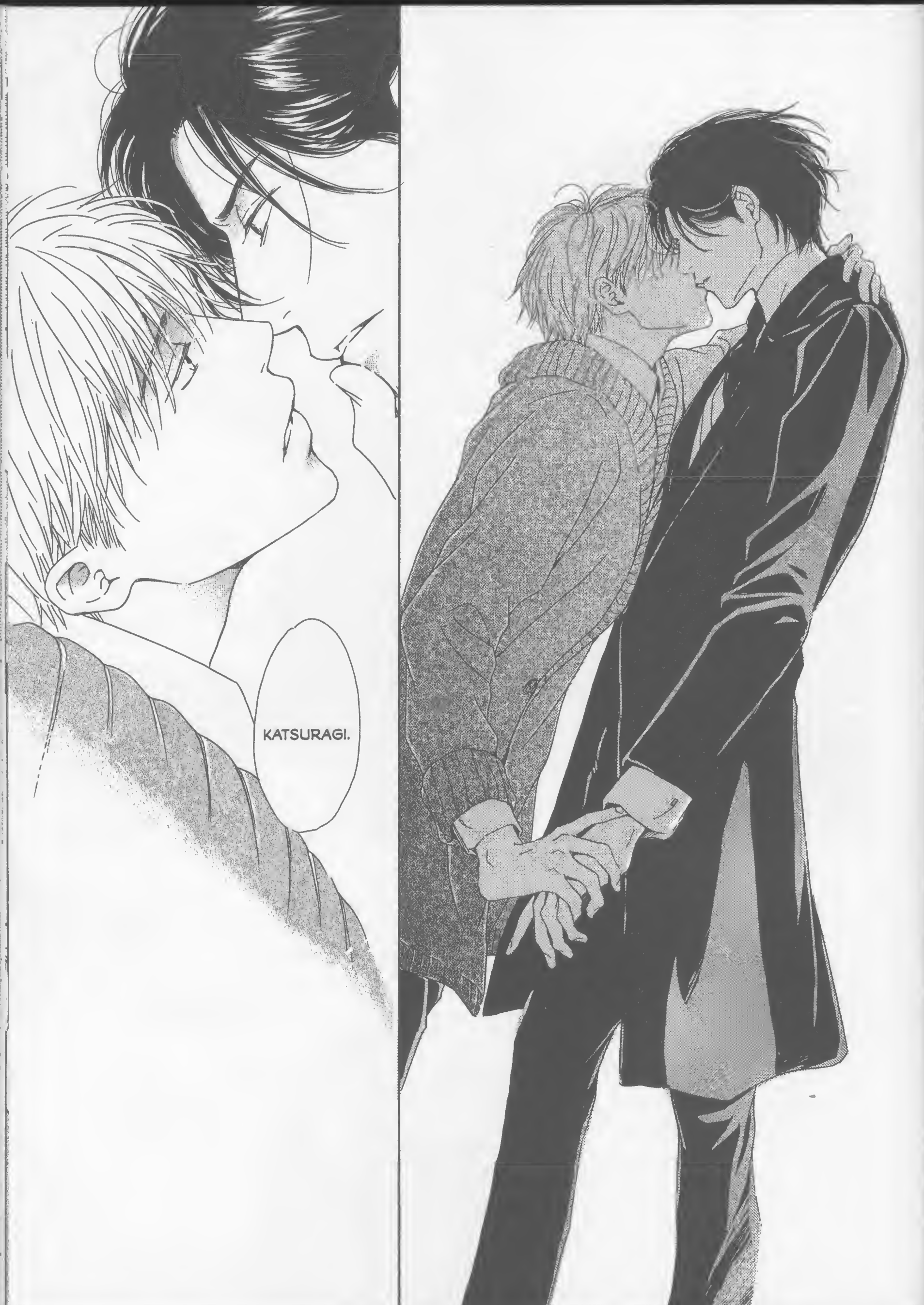

WHAT YOU MEANT BY TELLING ME TO ADAPT TO MY SITUATION...
EVERYTHING YOU EVER TAUGHT ME...
NOW I CAN SEE THAT IT'S ALL INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT.

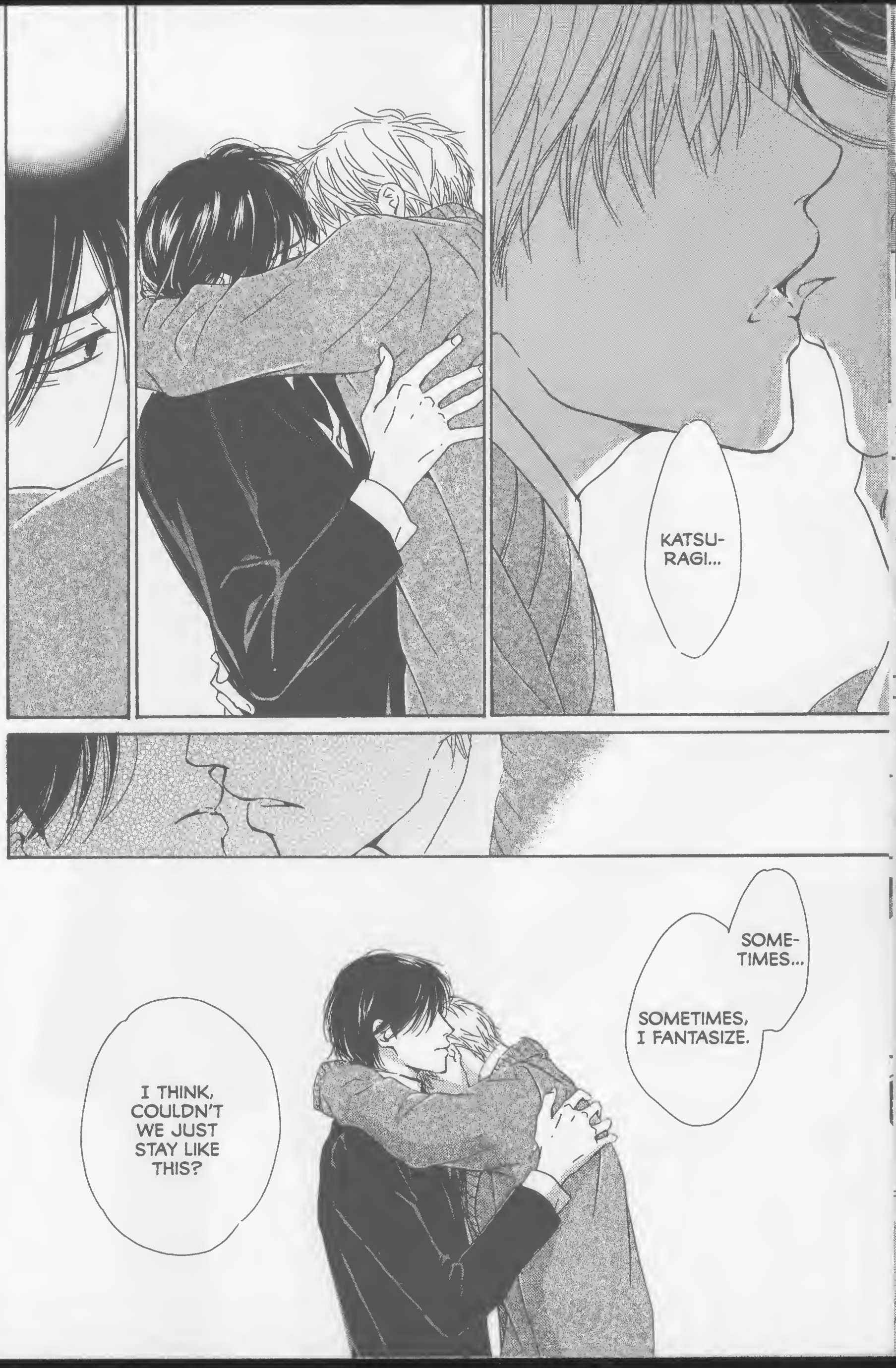

...
KLAK
HEY, THIS GOVERNOR...
HE'S RELATED TO THE KATSURAGIS, RIGHT? SO MAYBE YOU KNOW MORE...
...DETAILS–

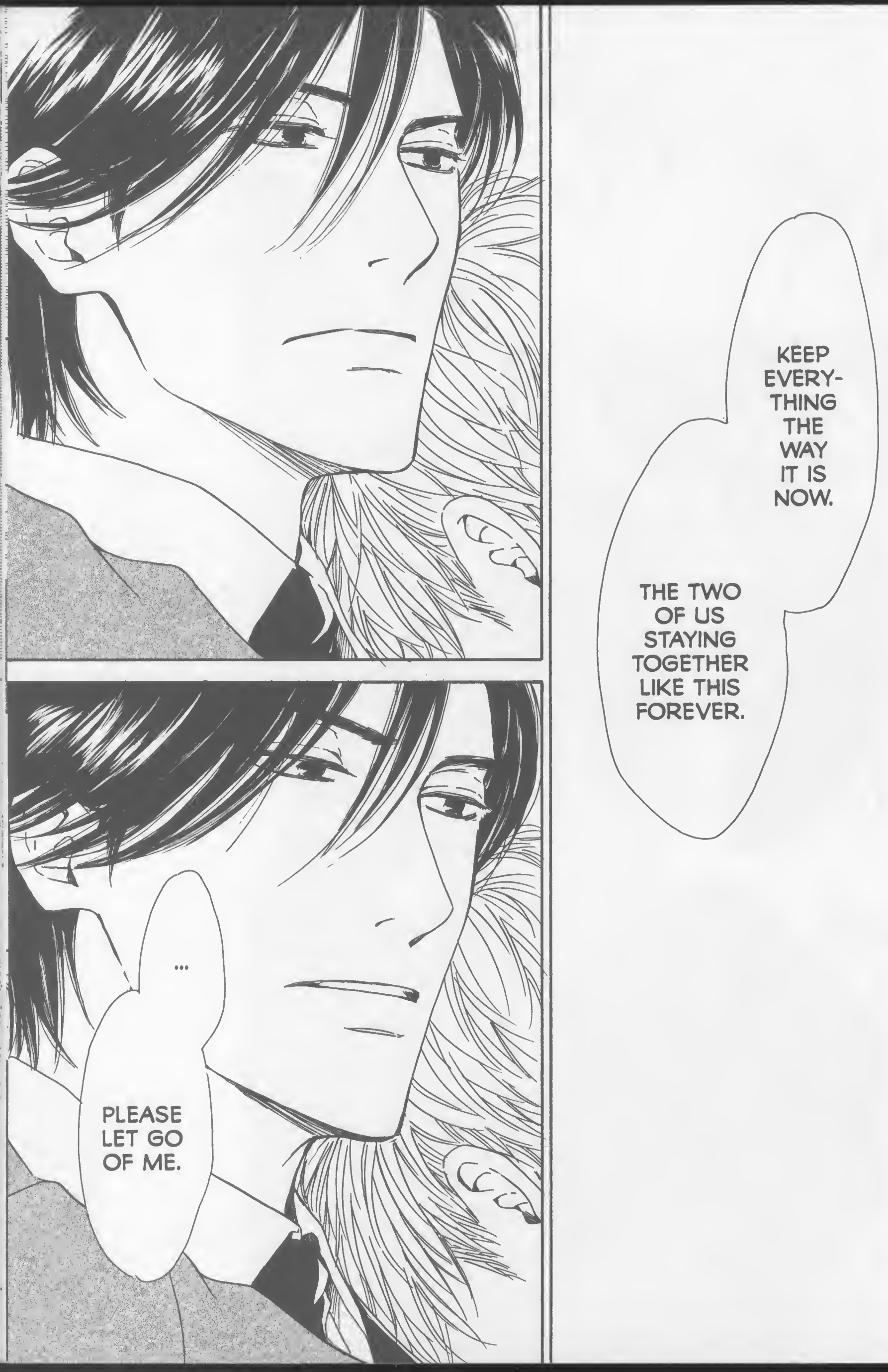

THAT WAS A SURPRISE ...

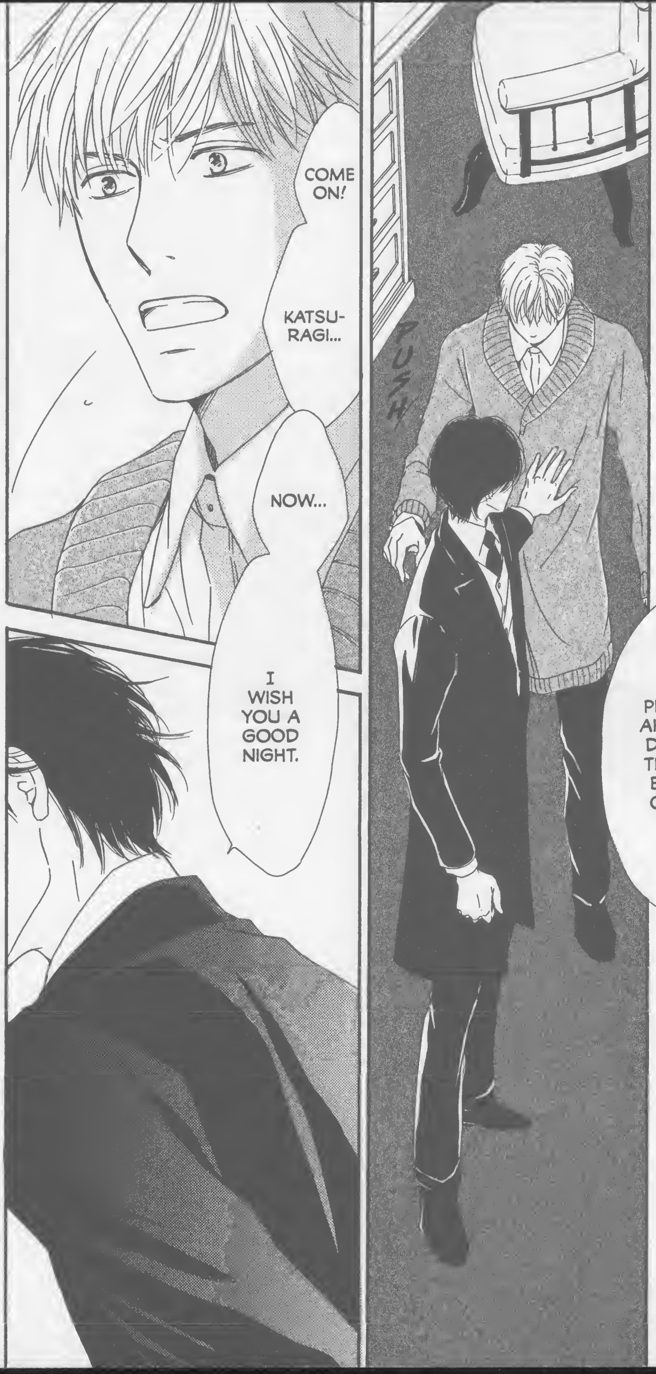

KATSU-RAGI.

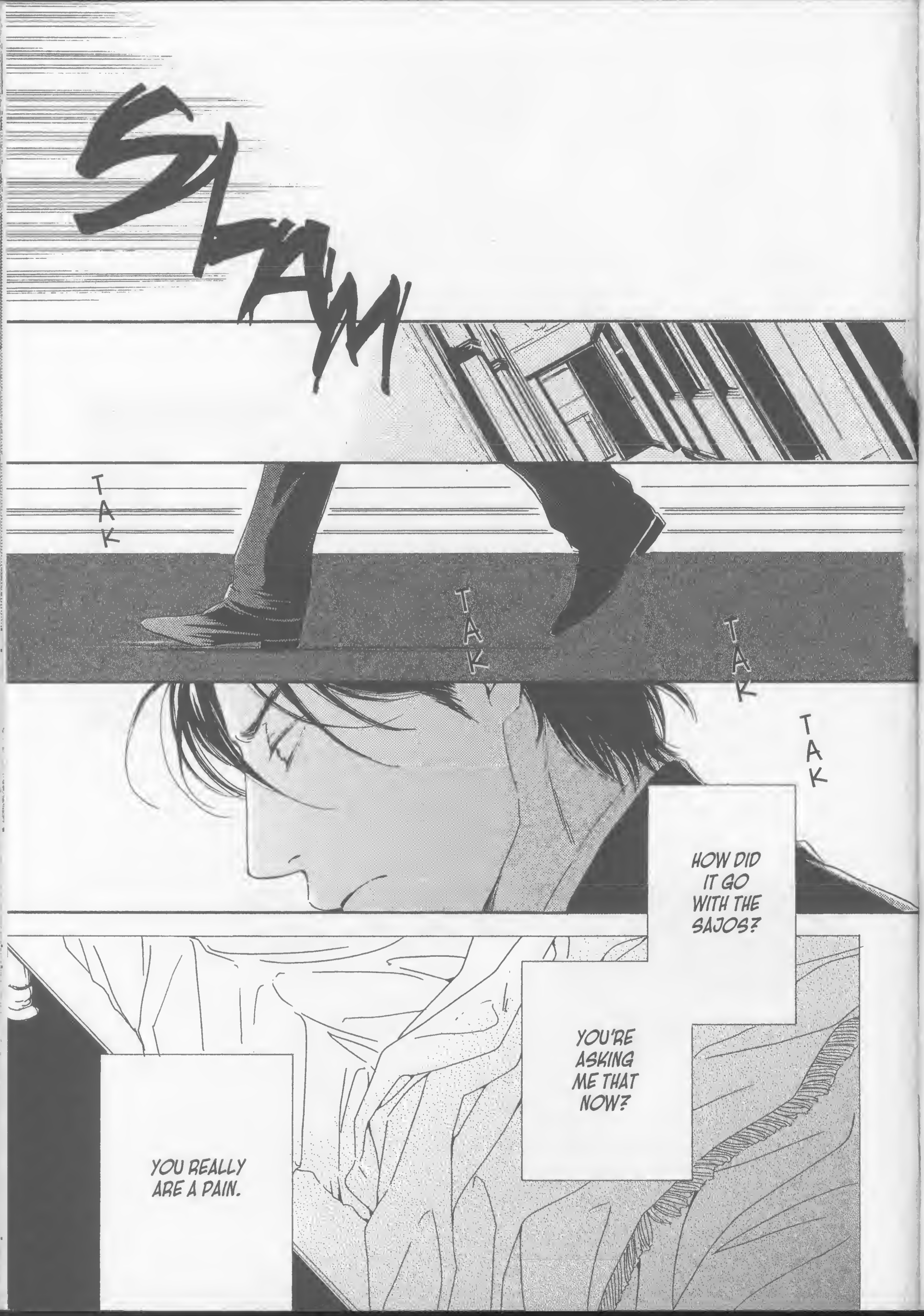

KISS
SHUDDER
...
MASTER AKIHITO ...

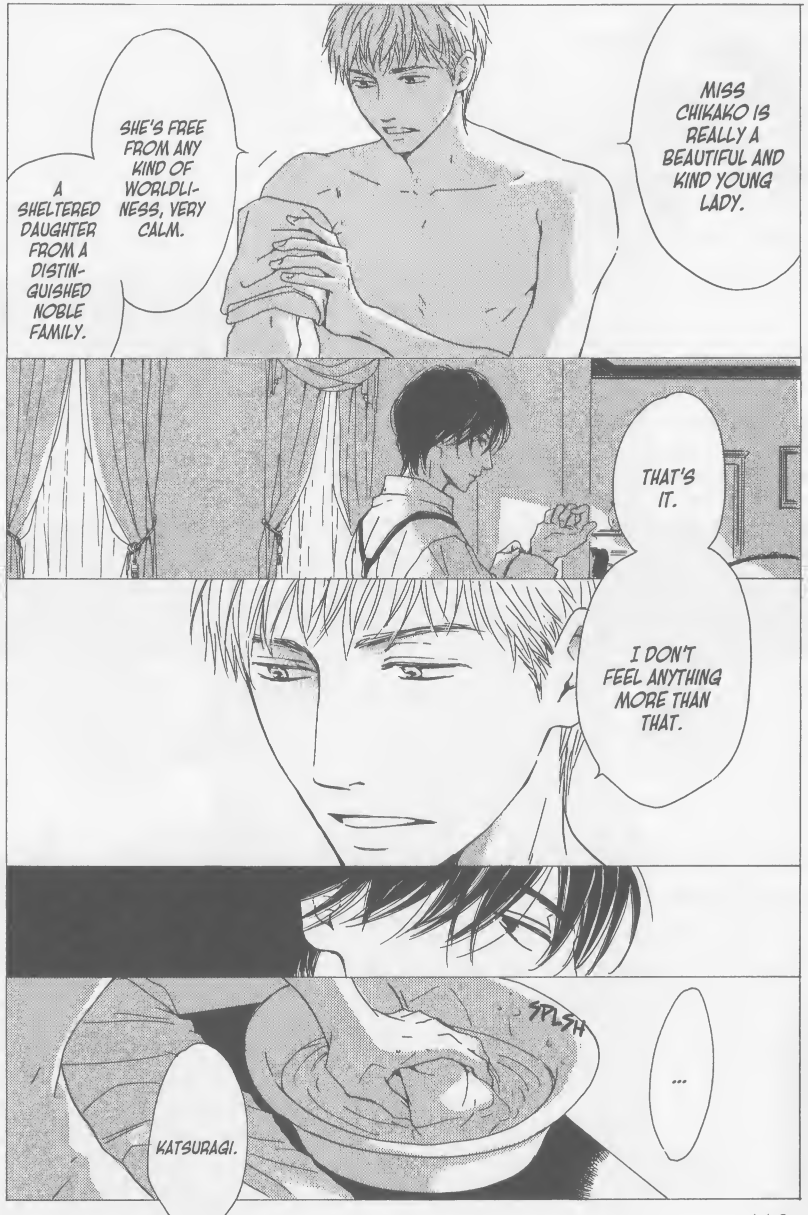

KATSURAGI.

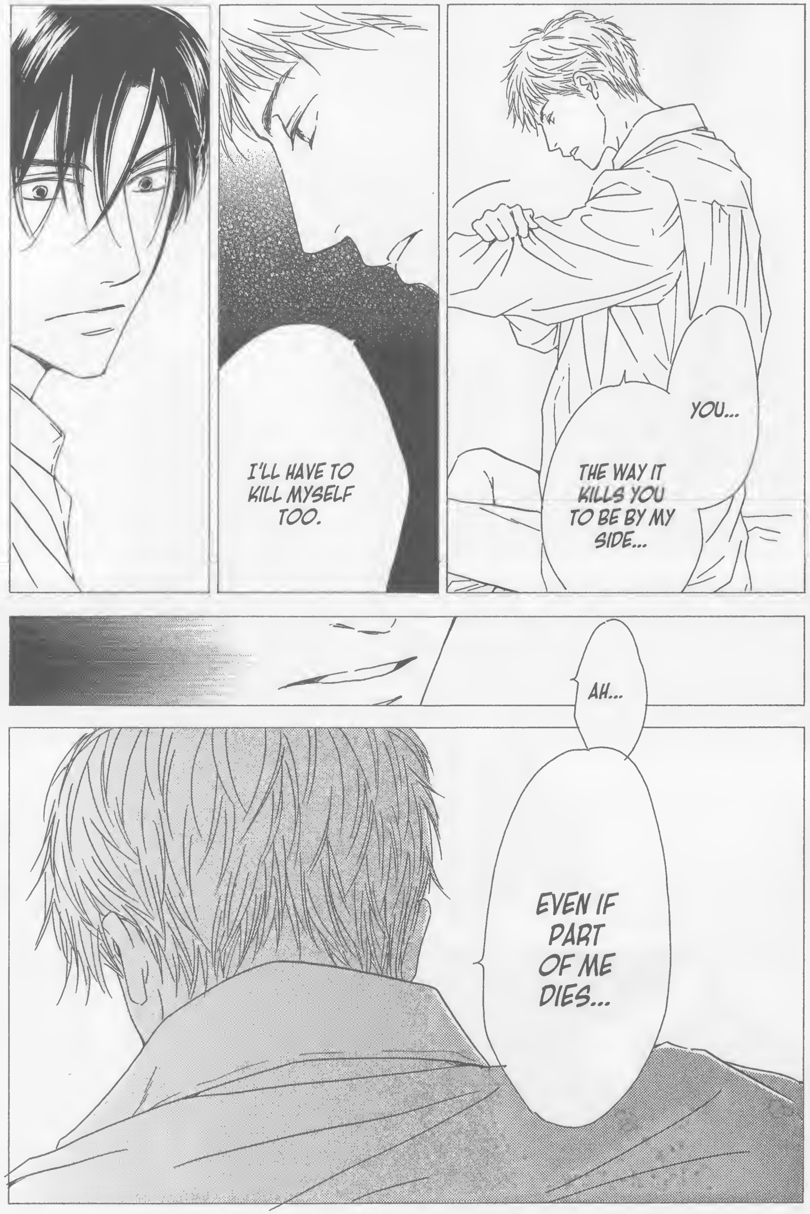

KATSURAGI...
SOMETIMES...
SOMETIMES, I FANTASIZE.
I THINK, COULDN'T WE JUST STAY LIKE THIS?

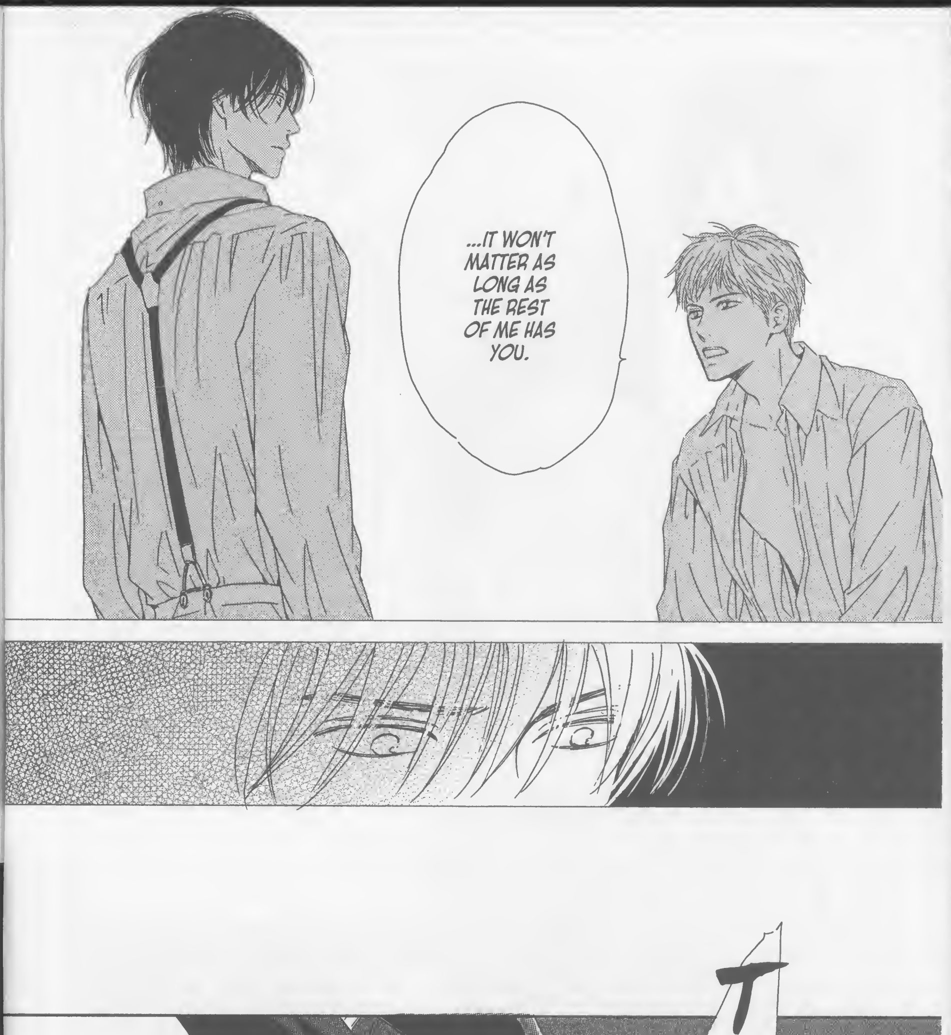

KEEP EVERYTHING THE WAY IT IS NOW.
THE TWO OF US STAYING TOGETHER LIKE THIS FOREVER.
...
PLEASE LET GO OF ME.

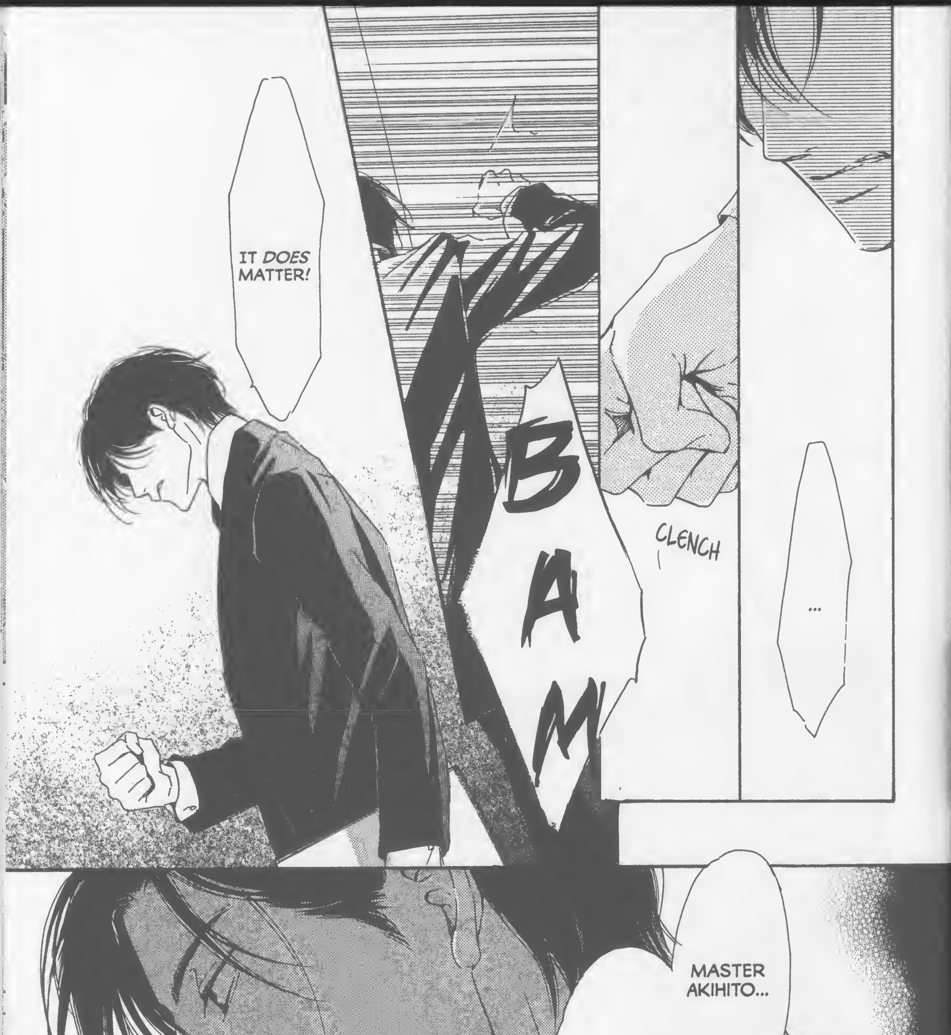

WHAT?
PUSH
I'LL HANDLE THE MATTER OF THE DOMAIN.
PLEASE GO AHEAD AND DEAL WITH THE OTHER BUSINESS ON YOUR OWN.
COME ON!
KATSU-RAGI...
NOW...
I WISH YOU A GOOD NIGHT.

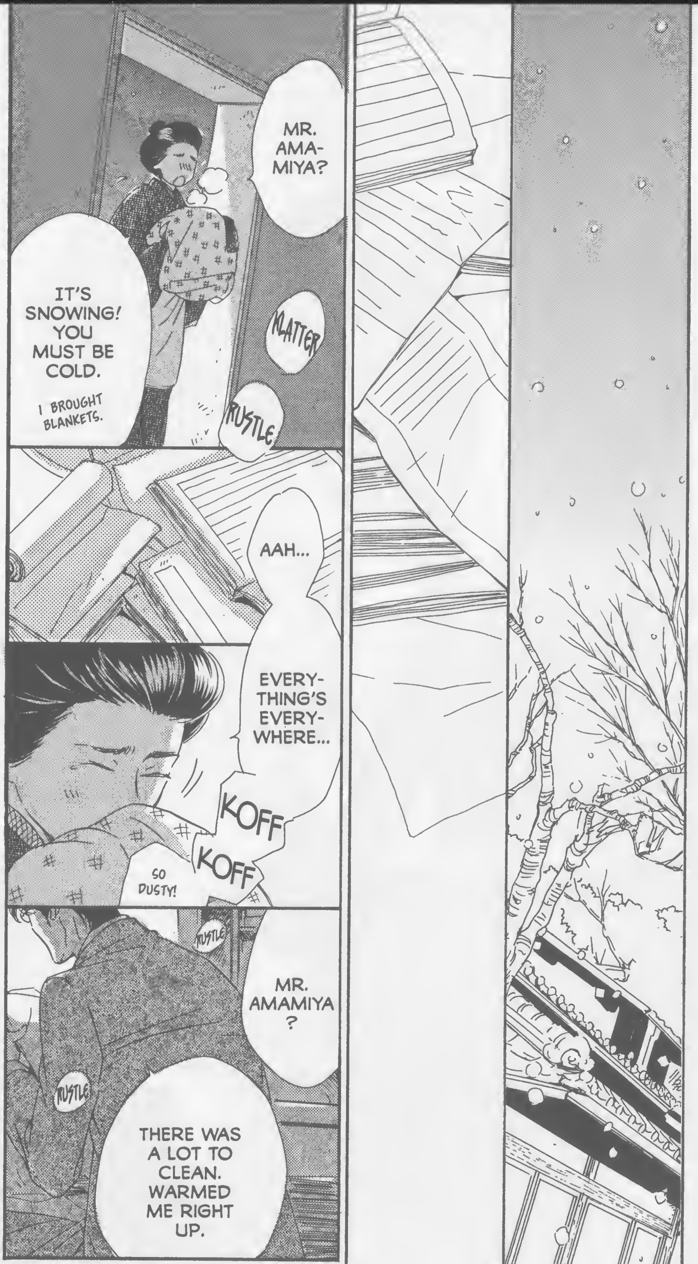

SLAM
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK
HOW DID IT GO WITH THE SAJOS?
YOU'RE ASKING ME THAT NOW?
YOU REALLY ARE A PAIN.

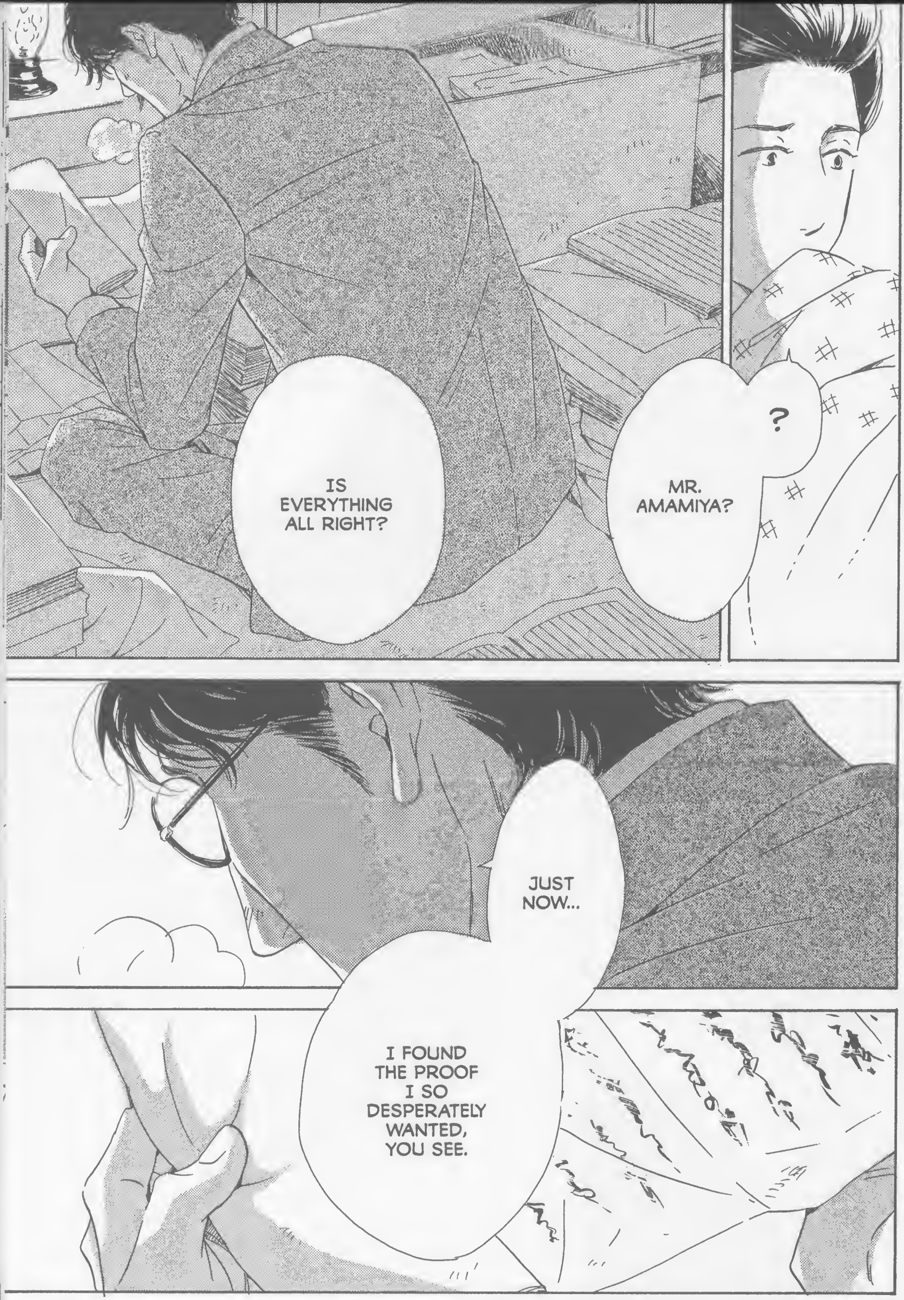

MISS CHIKAKO IS REALLY A BEAUTIFUL AND KIND YOUNG LADY.
SHE'S FREE FROM ANY KIND OF WORLDLINESS, VERY CALM.
A SHELTERED DAUGHTER FROM A DISTINGUISHED NOBLE FAMILY.
THAT'S IT.
I DON'T FEEL ANYTHING MORE THAN THAT.
SPLSH
...
KATSURAGI.

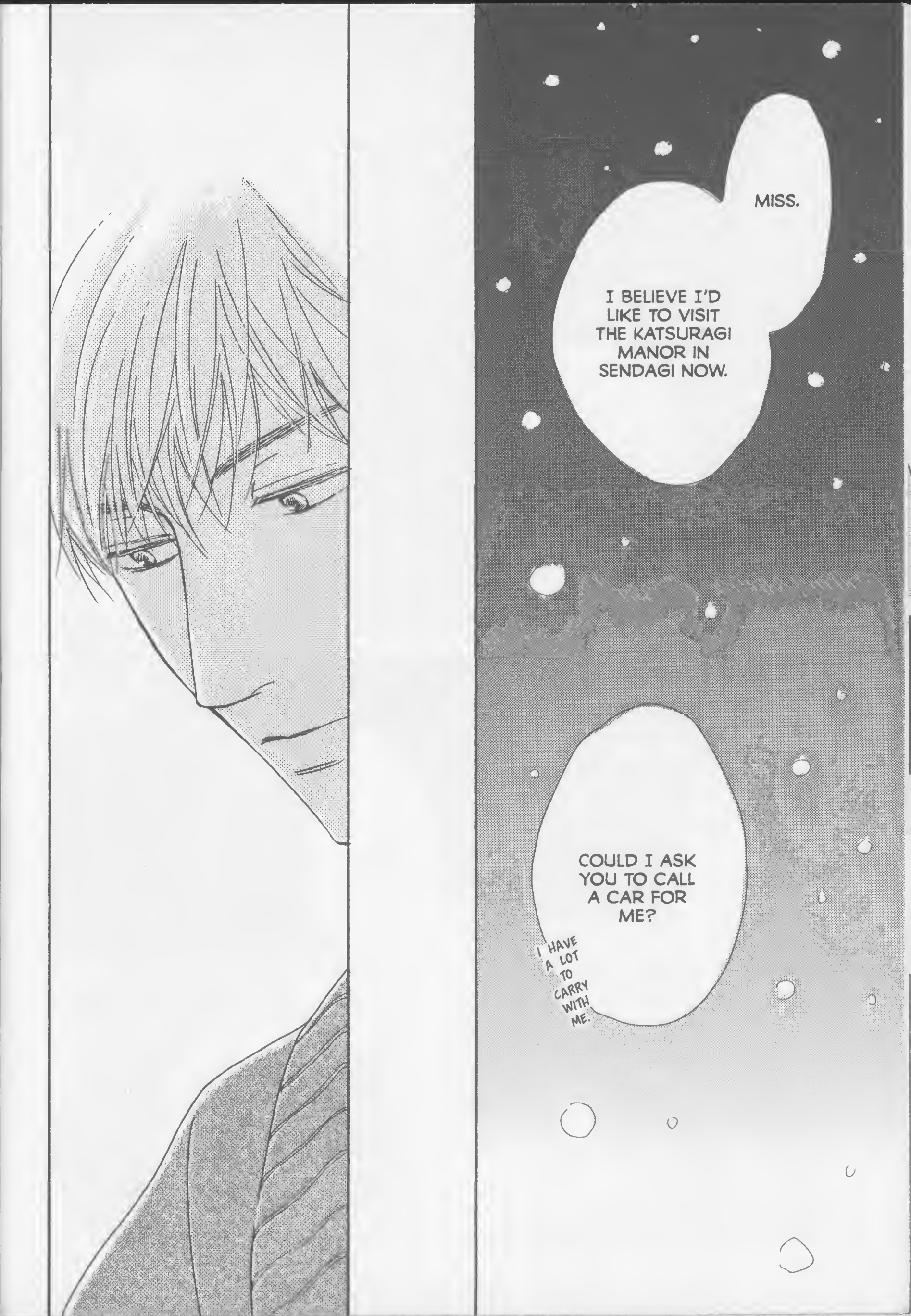

YOU...
THE WAY IT KILLS YOU TO BE BY MY SIDE...
I'LL HAVE TO KILL MYSELF TOO.
AH...
EVEN IF PART OF ME DIES...

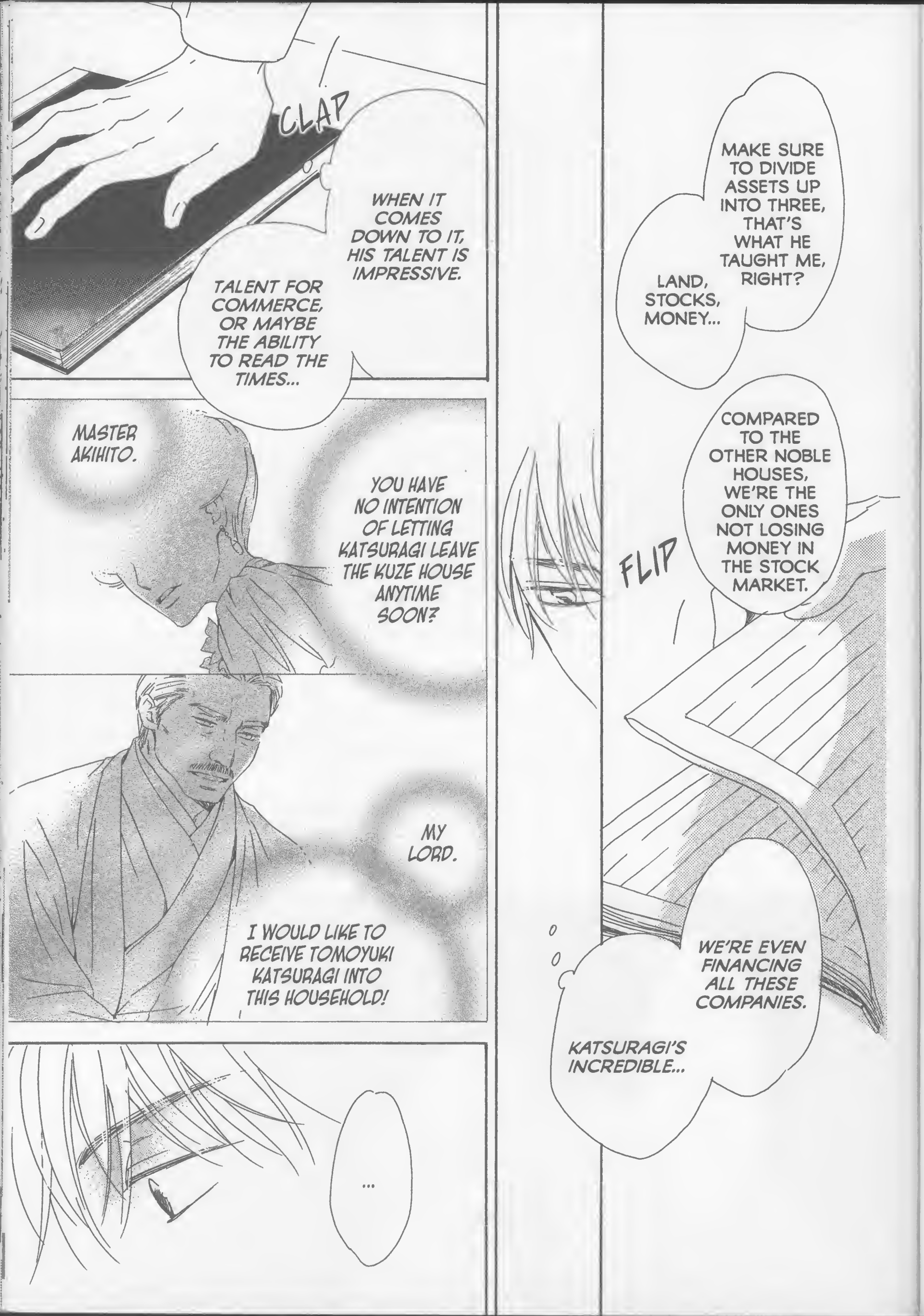

...IT WON'T MATTER AS LONG AS THE REST OF ME HAS YOU.
TAK

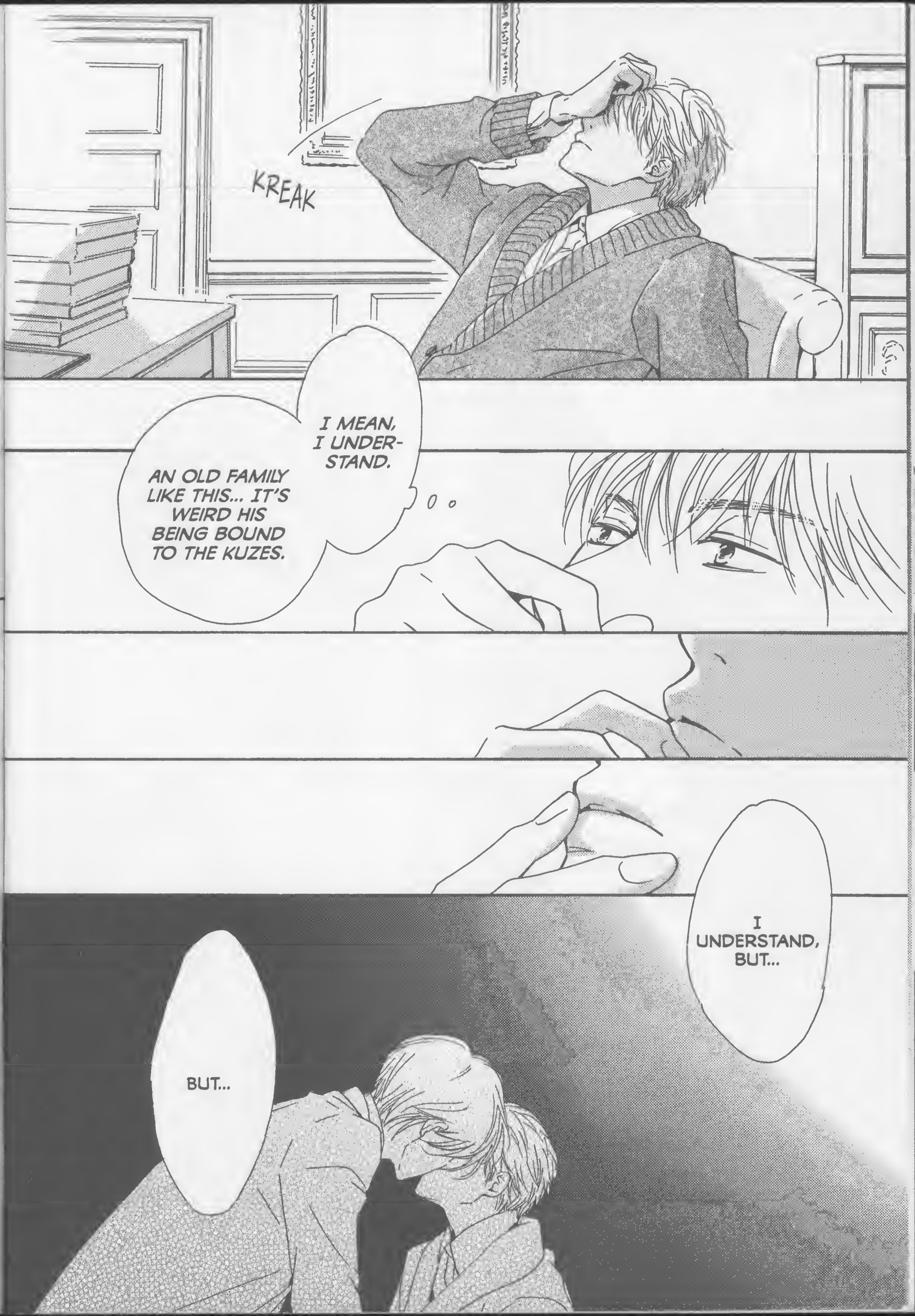

...
CLENCH
BAM
IT DOES MATTER!
MASTER AKIHITO...
...IS NOT LIKE ME.

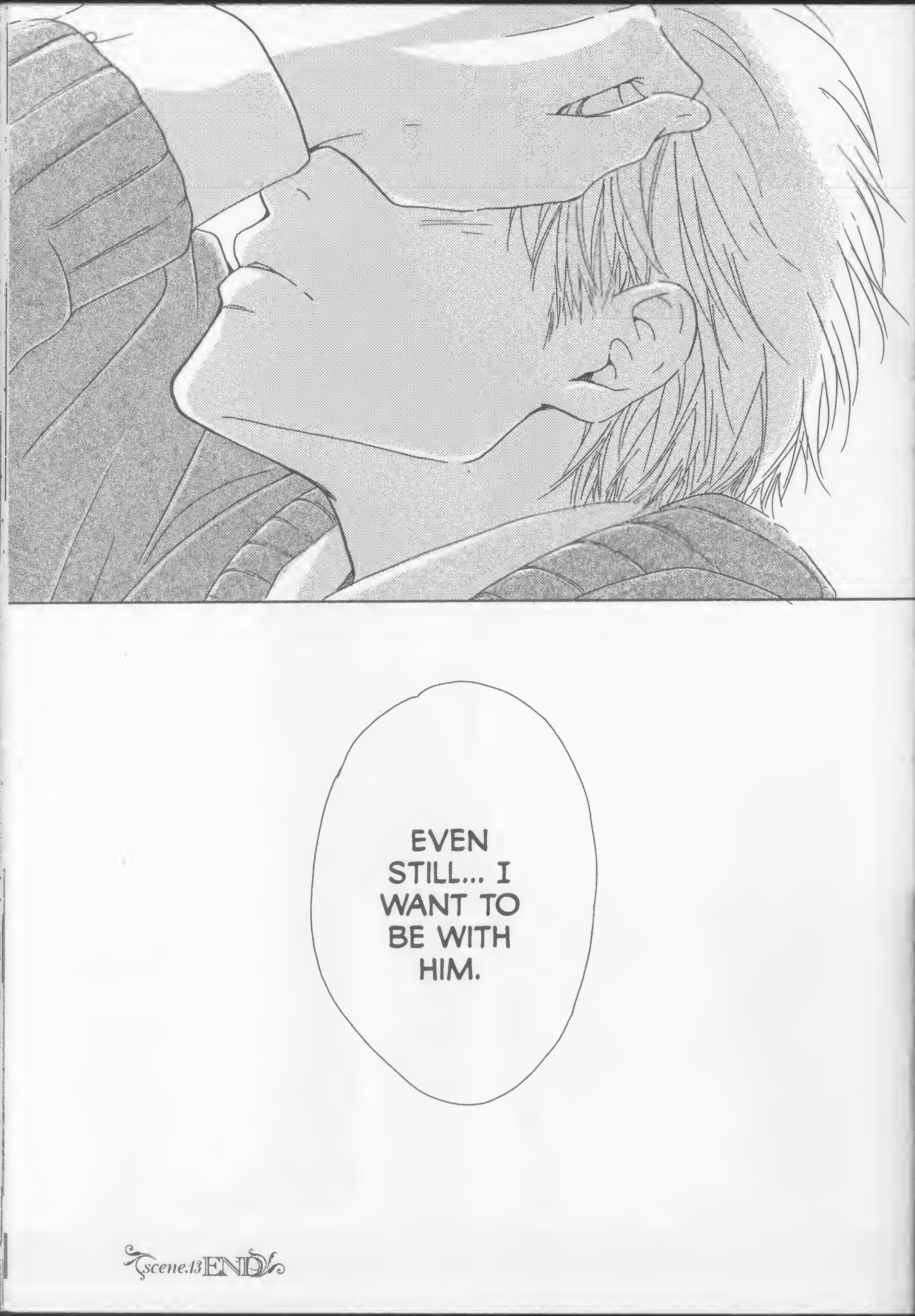

MR. AMAMIYA?
IT'S SNOWING! YOU MUST BE COLD.
I BROUGHT BLANKETS.
KLATTER
RUSTLE
AAH...
EVERYTHING'S EVERYWHERE...
KOFF
KOFF
SO DUSTY!
RUSTLE
MR. AMAMIYA?
RUSTLE
THERE WAS A LOT TO CLEAN. WARMED ME RIGHT UP.


?
MR. AMAMIYA?
IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
JUST NOW...
I FOUND THE PROOF I SO DESPERATELY WANTED, YOU SEE.


MISS.
I BELIEVE I'D LIKE TO VISIT THE KATSURAGI MANOR IN SENDAGI NOW.
COULD I ASK YOU TO CALL A CAR FOR ME?
I HAVE A LOT TO CARRY WITH ME.


MAKE SURE TO DIVIDE ASSETS UP INTO THREE, THAT'S WHAT HE TAUGHT ME, RIGHT?
LAND, STOCKS, MONEY...
FLIP
COMPARED TO THE OTHER NOBLE HOUSES, WE'RE THE ONLY ONES NOT LOSING MONEY IN THE STOCK MARKET.
WE'RE EVEN FINANCING ALL THESE COMPANIES.
KATSURAGI'S INCREDIBLE...
CLAP
WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, HIS TALENT IS IMPRESSIVE.
TALENT FOR COMMERCE, OR MAYBE THE ABILITY TO READ THE TIMES...
MASTER AKIHITO.
YOU HAVE NO INTENTION OF LETTING KATSURAGI LEAVE THE KUZE HOUSE ANYTIME SOON?
MY LORD.
I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI INTO THIS HOUSEHOLD!
...


KREAK
I MEAN, I UNDERSTAND.
AN OLD FAMILY LIKE THIS... IT'S WEIRD HIS BEING BOUND TO THE KUZES.
I UNDERSTAND, BUT...
BUT...

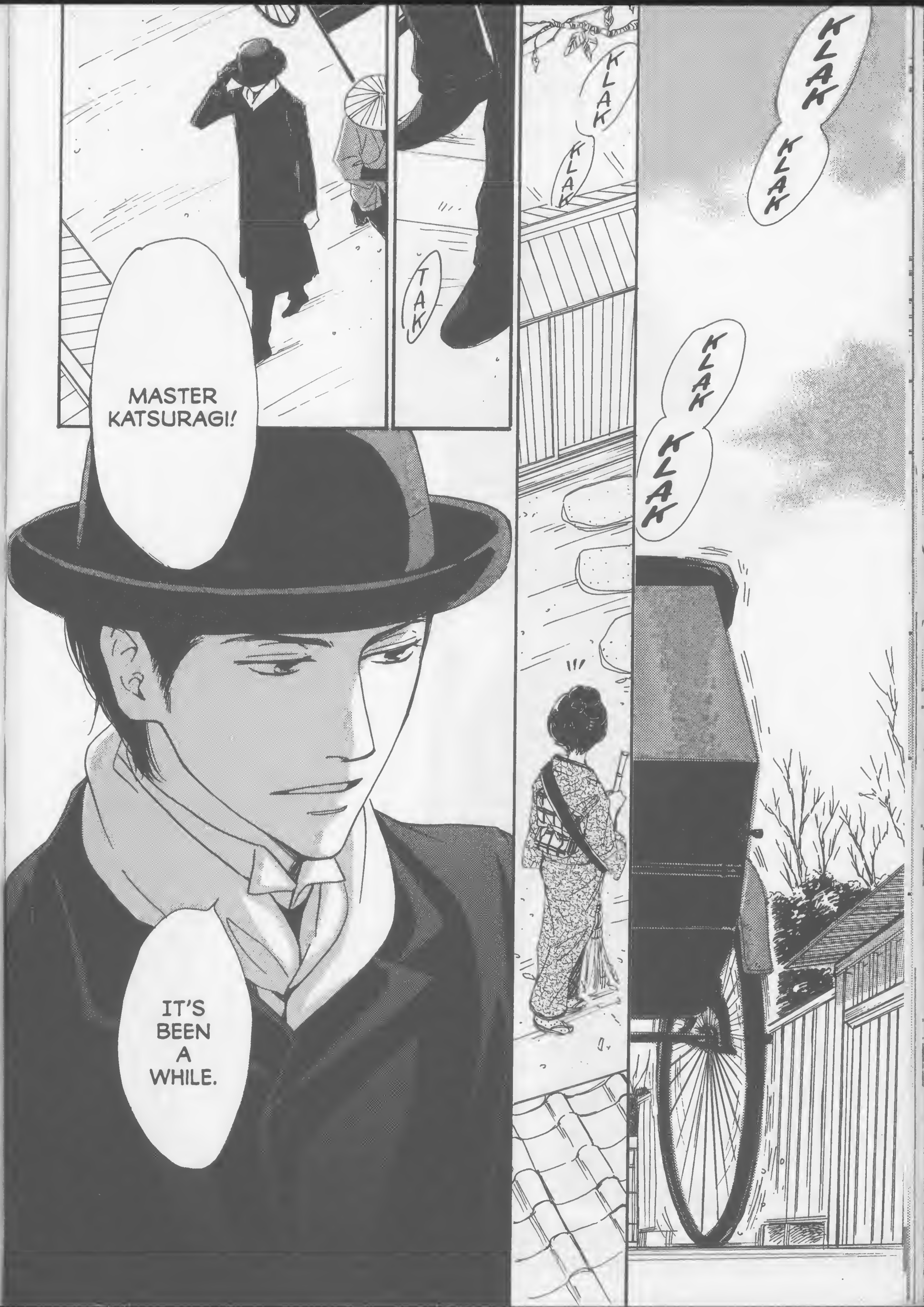

EVEN STILL... I WANT TO BE WITH HIM.

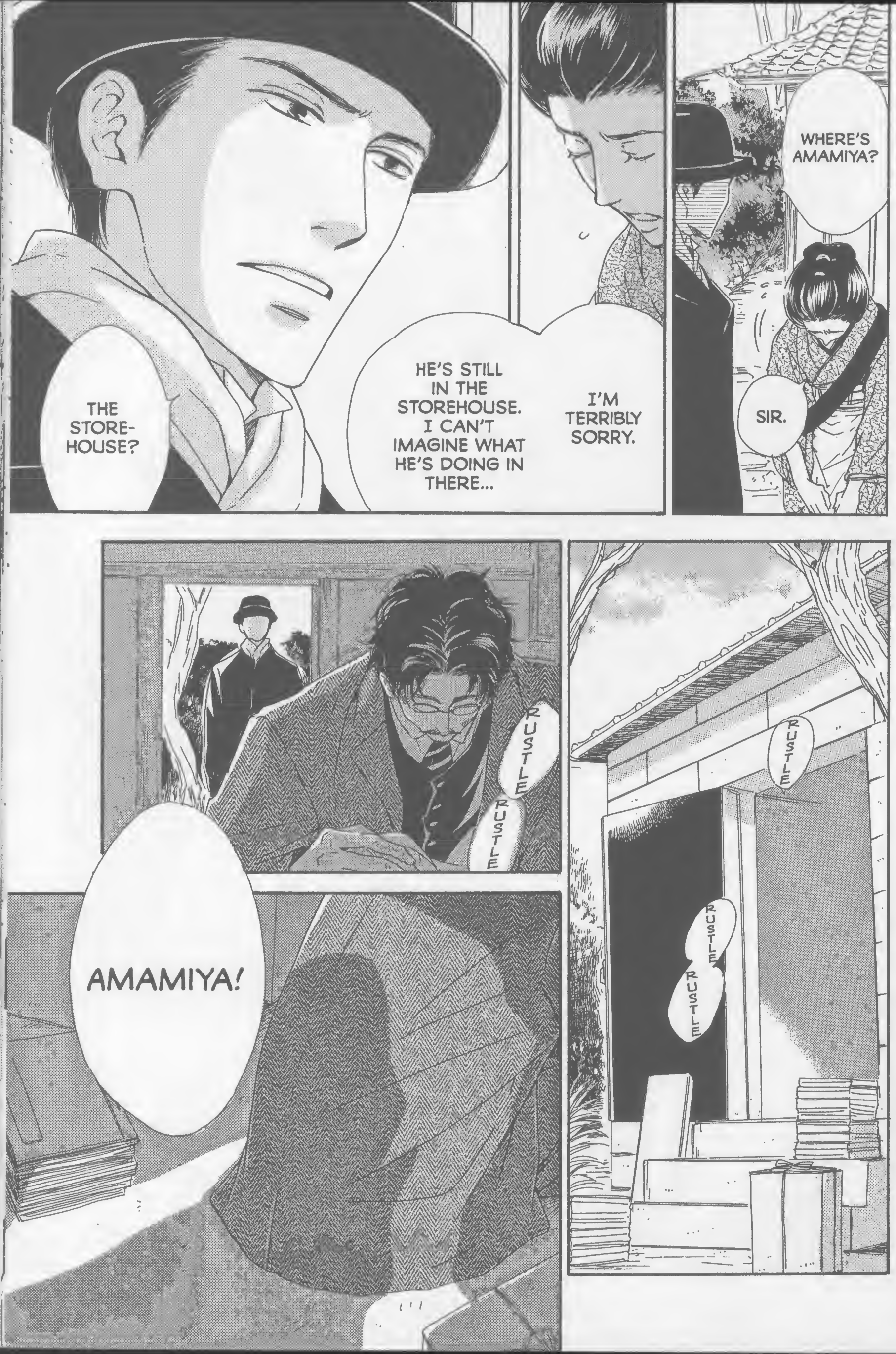
scene.13 END

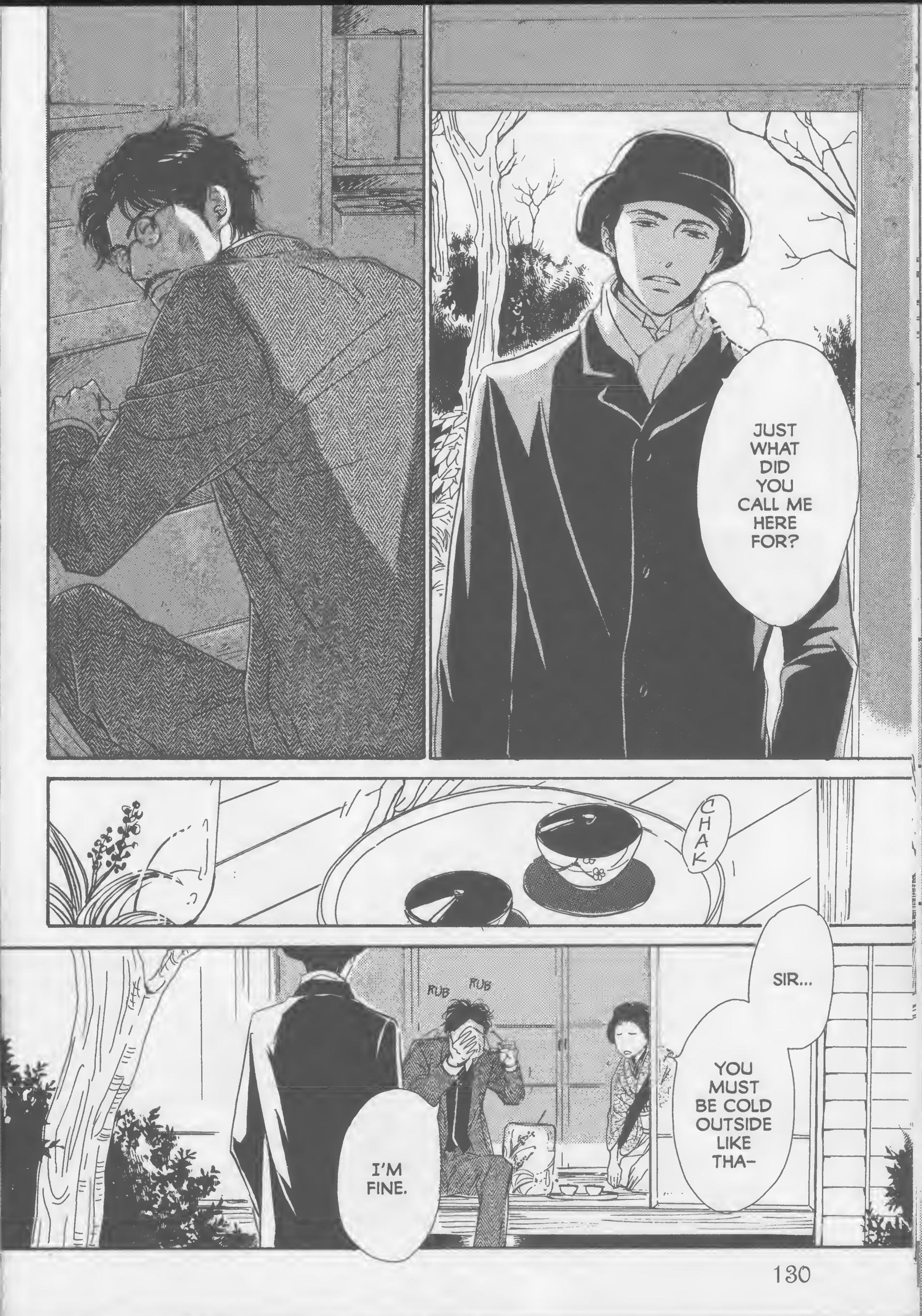
憂鬱な朝

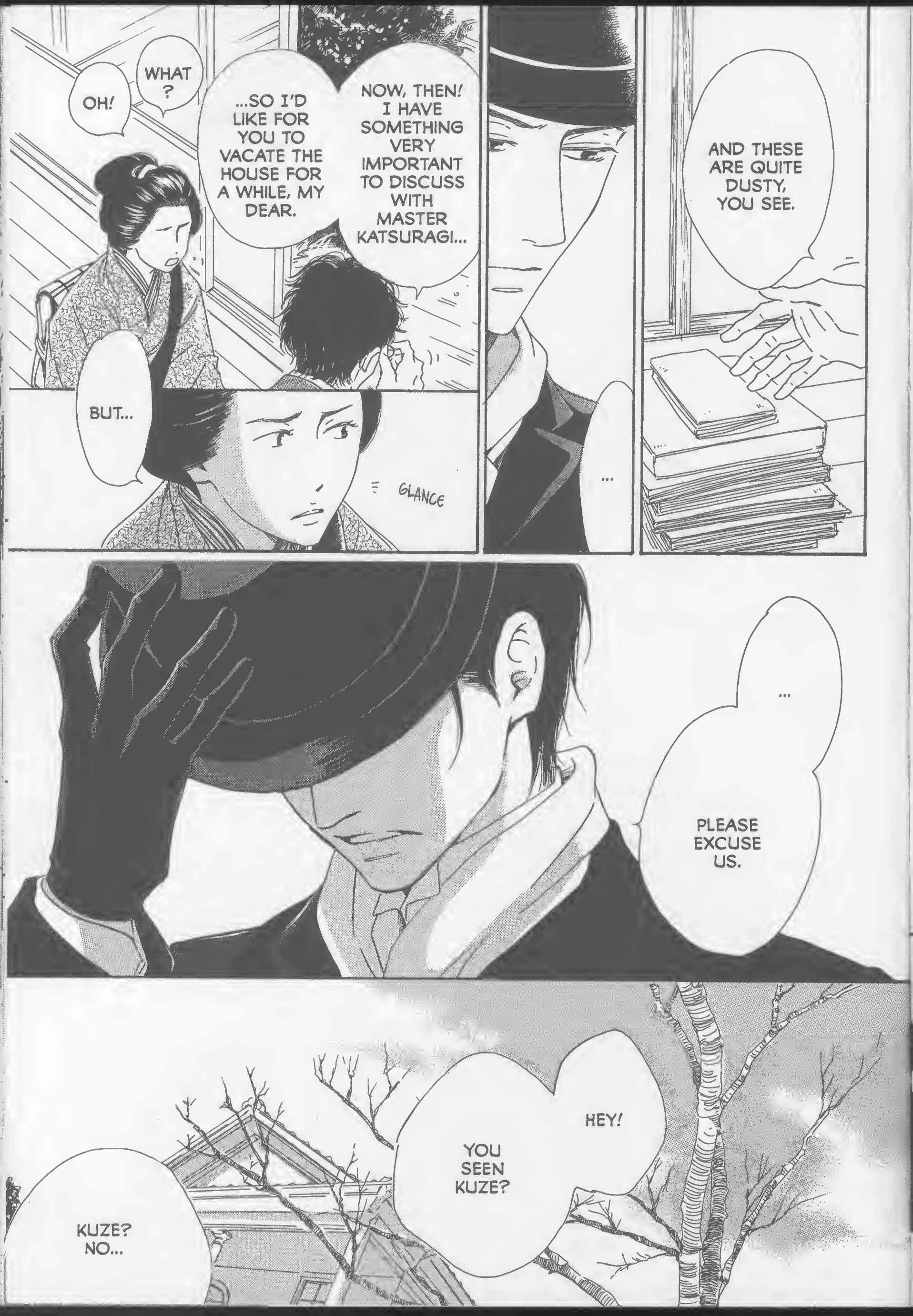
scene.14

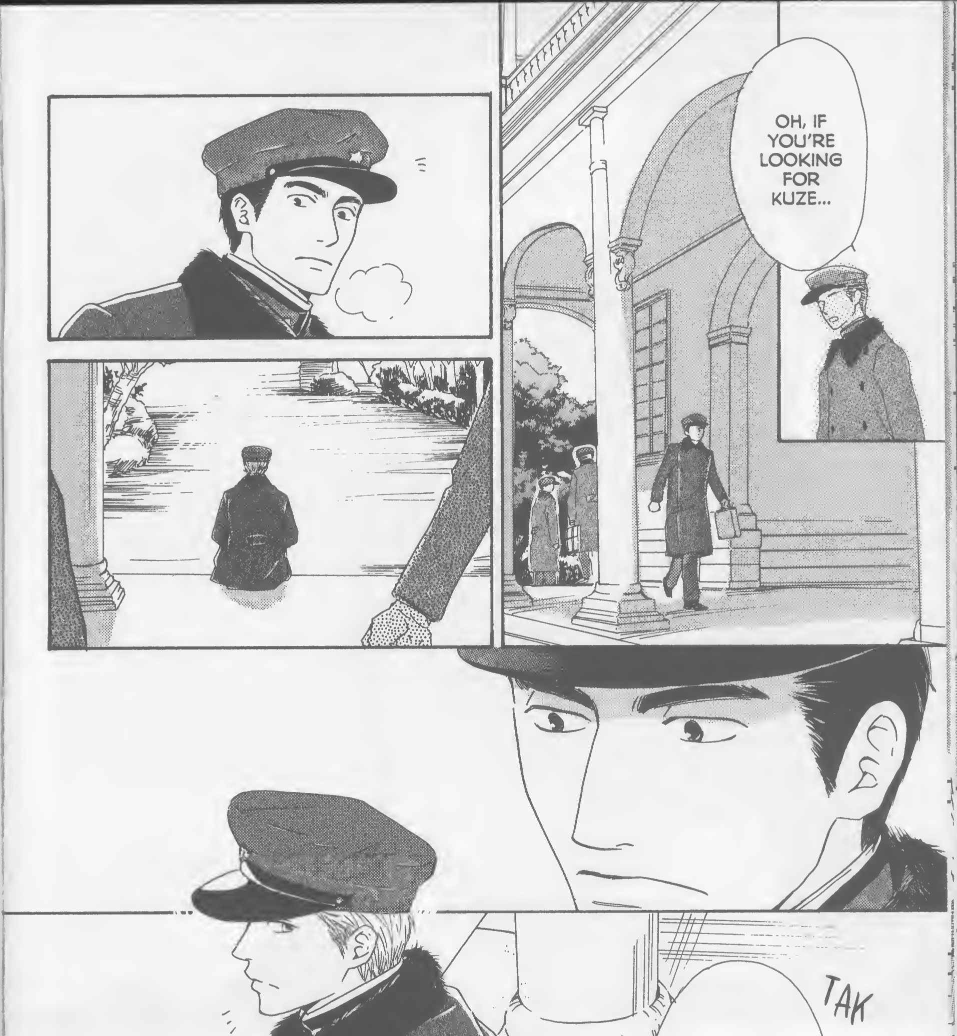
Blue Morning: Scene 14

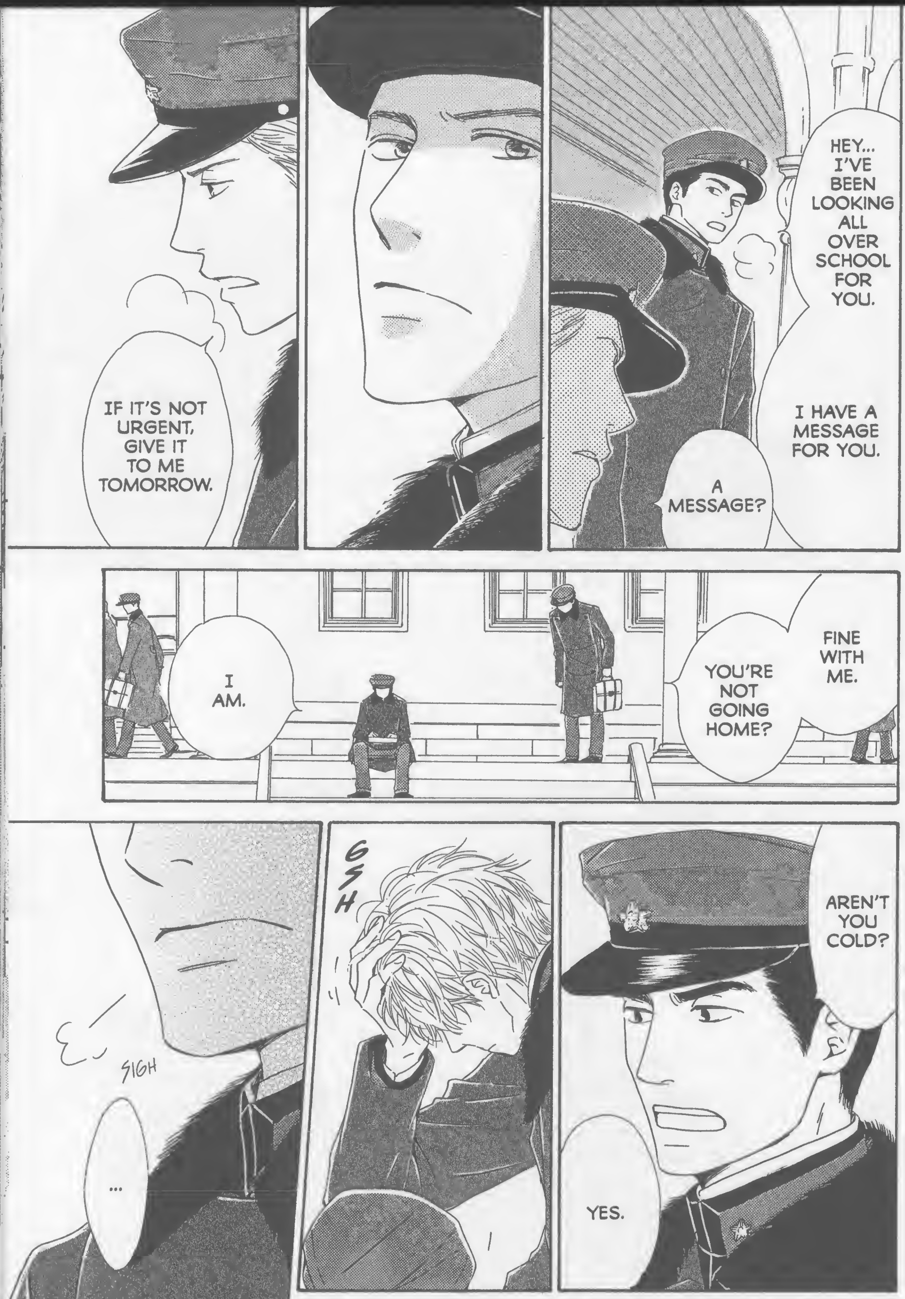

KLAK KLAK KLAK
KLAK KLAK KLAK
KLAK KLAK KLAK
TAK
MASTER KATSURAGI!
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.

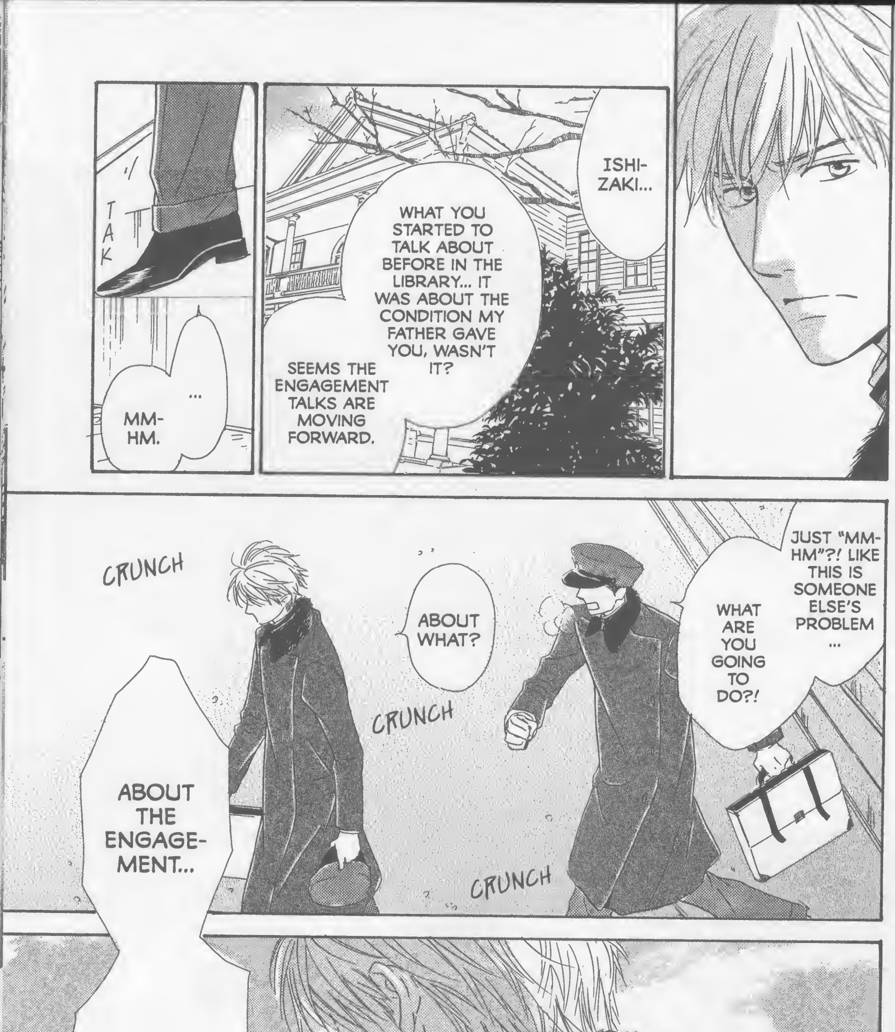

WHERE'S AMAMIYA?
SIR.
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY.
HE'S STILL IN THE STOREHOUSE. I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT HE'S DOING IN THERE...
THE STOREHOUSE?
RUSTLE
RUSTLE RUSTLE
RUSTLE RUSTLE
AMAMIYA!

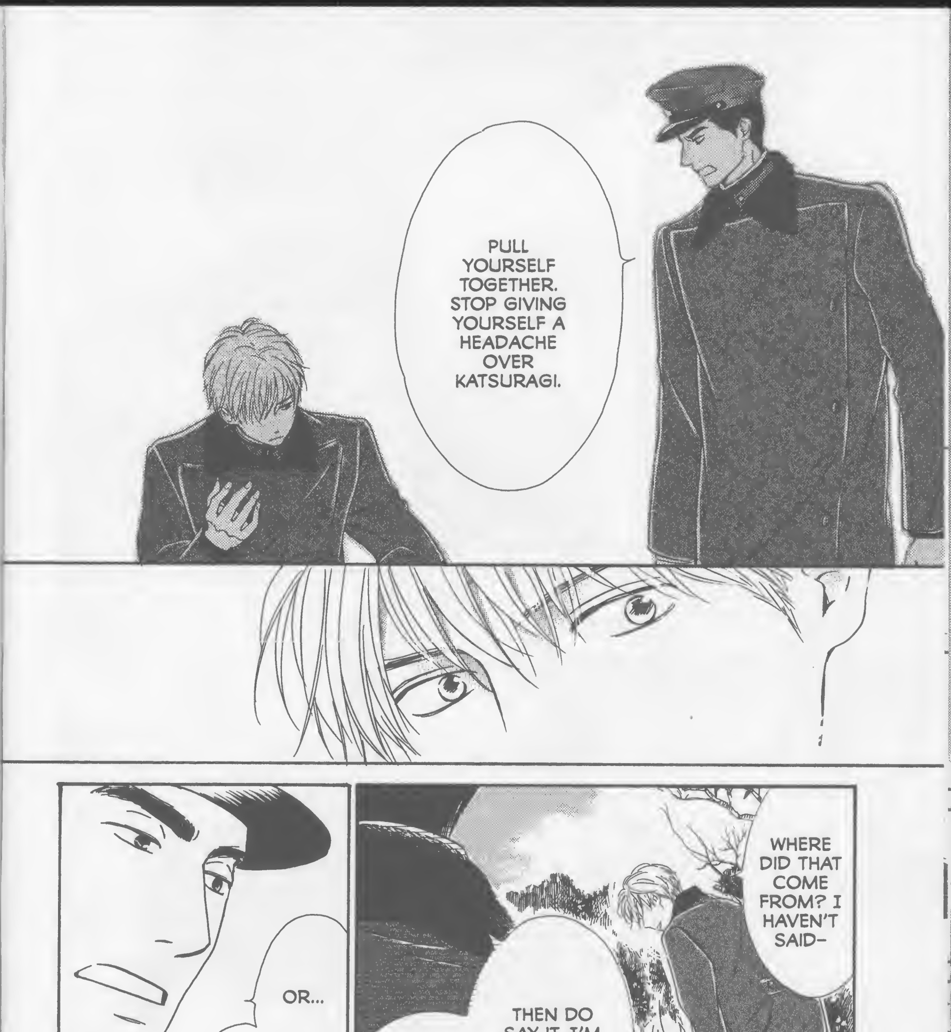

JUST WHAT DID YOU CALL ME HERE FOR?
CHAK
SIR...
YOU MUST BE COLD OUTSIDE LIKE THA–
RUB RUB
I'M FINE.

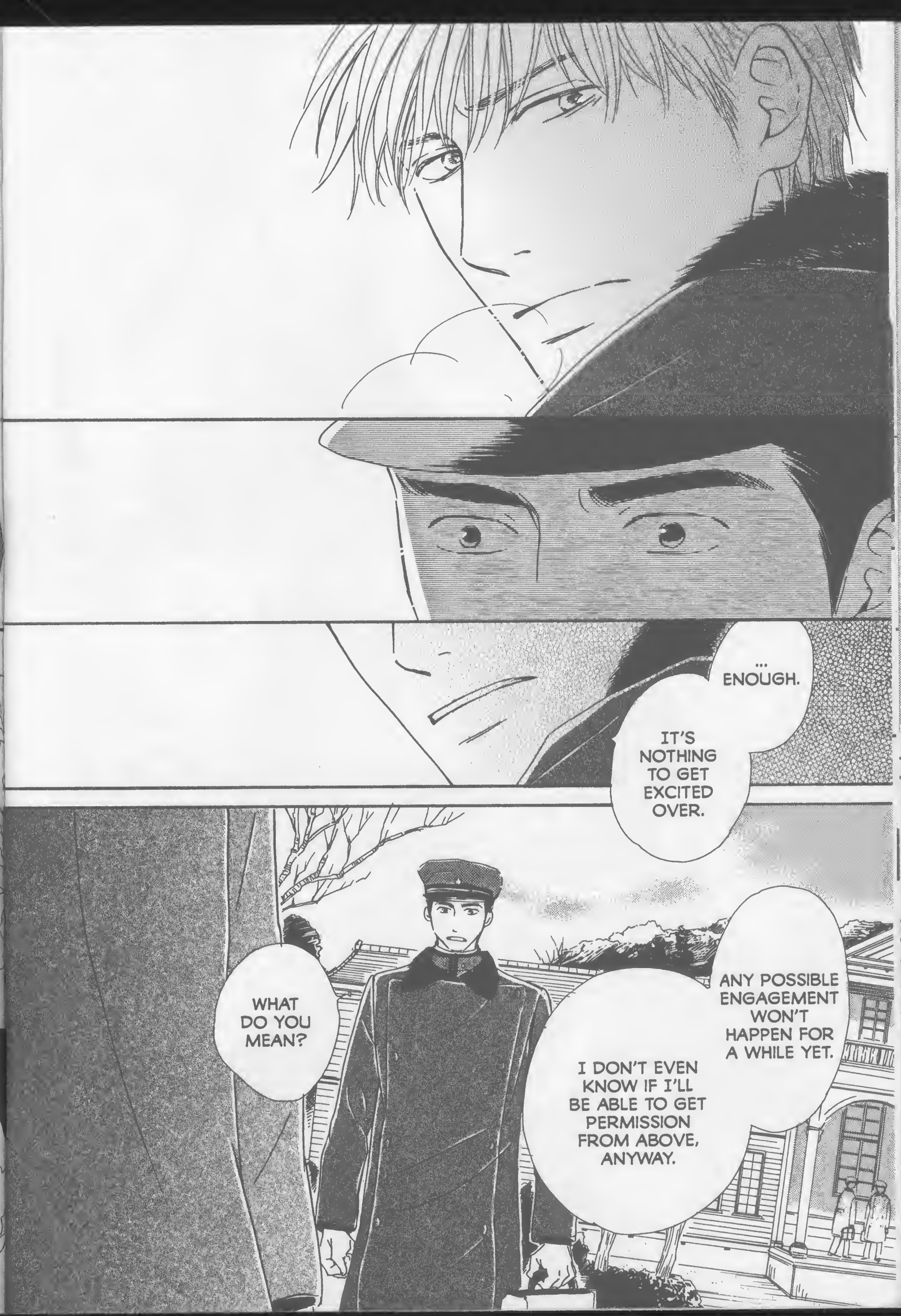

AND THESE ARE QUITE DUSTY, YOU SEE.
...
NOW, THEN! I HAVE SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS WITH MASTER KATSURAGI...
...SO I'D LIKE FOR YOU TO VACATE THE HOUSE FOR A WHILE, MY DEAR.
WHAT?
OH!
BUT...
GLANCE
...
PLEASE EXCUSE US.
HEY!
YOU SEEN KUZE?
KUZE? NO...

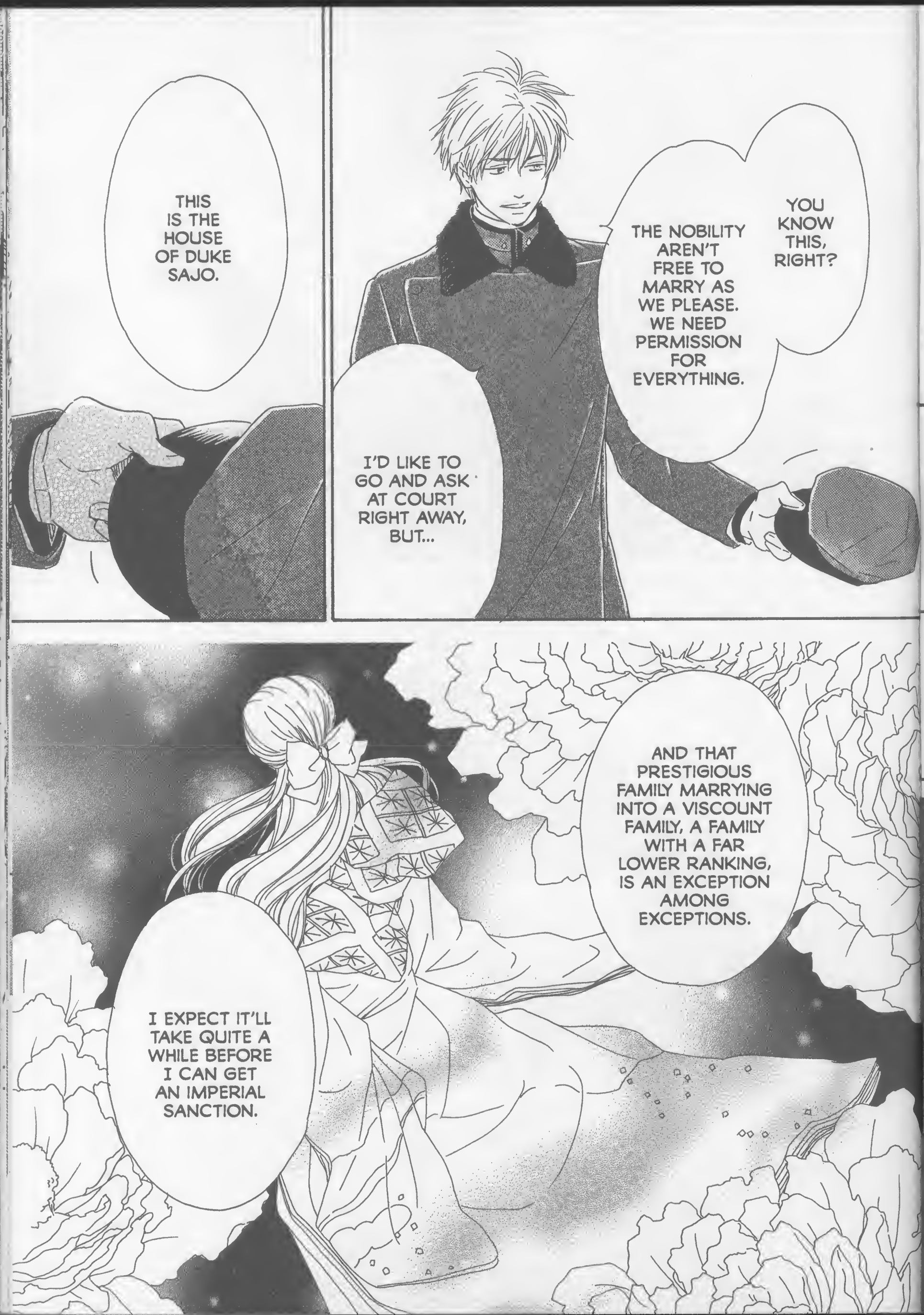

OH, IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR KUZE...
KUZE!
TAK

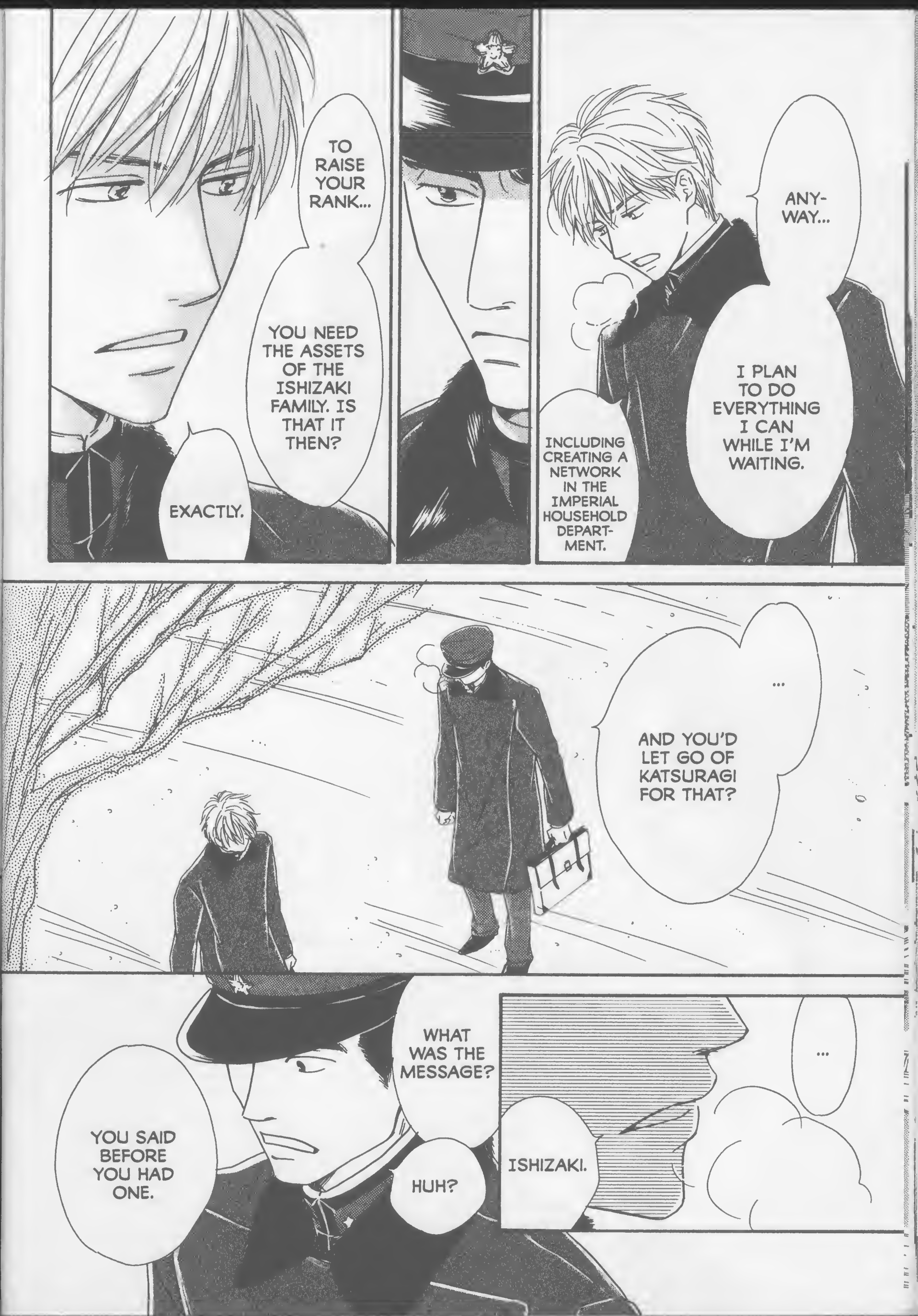

HEY... I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER SCHOOL FOR YOU.
I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU.
A MESSAGE?
IF IT'S NOT URGENT, GIVE IT TO ME TOMORROW.
FINE WITH ME.
YOU'RE NOT GOING HOME?
I AM.
AREN'T YOU COLD?
YES.
GSH
SIGH
...

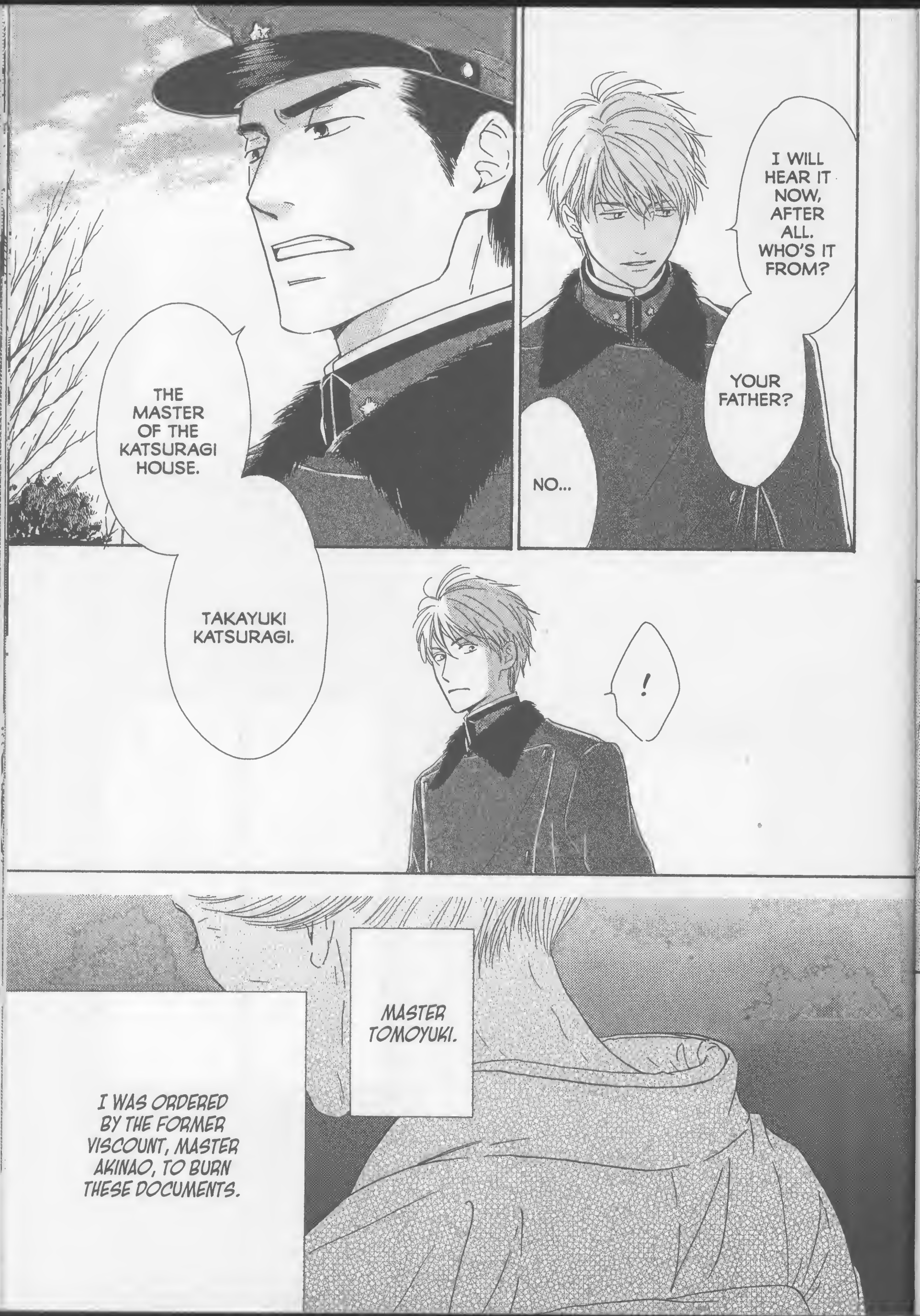

ISHI-ZAKI...
WHAT YOU STARTED TO TALK ABOUT BEFORE IN THE LIBRARY... IT WAS ABOUT THE CONDITION MY FATHER GAVE YOU, WASN'T IT?
SEEMS THE ENGAGEMENT TALKS ARE MOVING FORWARD.
TAK
...
MM-HM.
JUST "MM-HM"?! LIKE THIS IS SOMEONE ELSE'S PROBLEM...
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?!
ABOUT WHAT?
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT...
ABOUT KATSURAGI!

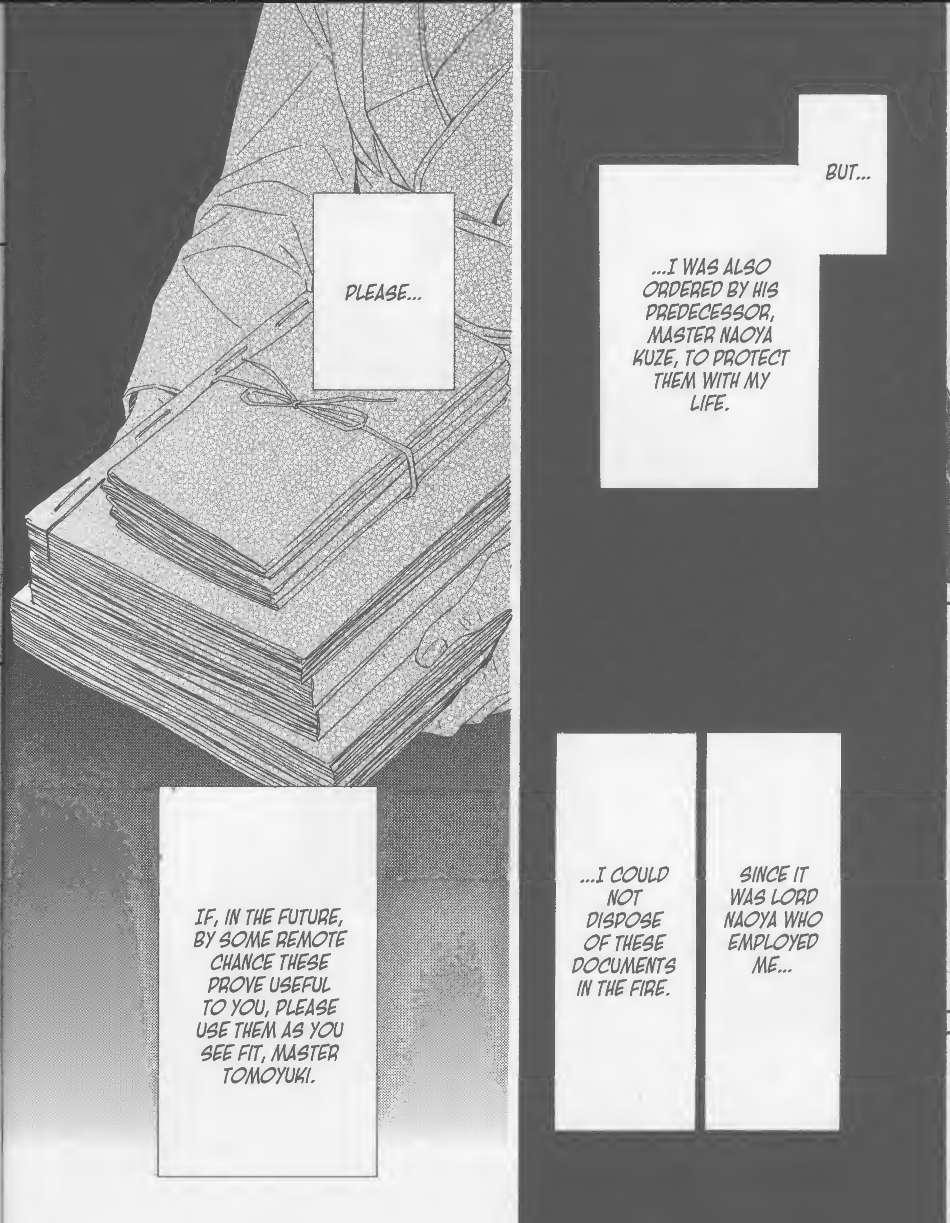

PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER. STOP GIVING YOURSELF A HEADACHE OVER KATSURAGI.
WHERE DID THAT COME FROM? I HAVEN'T SAID–
THEN DO SAY IT. I'M HERE TO LISTEN.
I'M THE ONLY PERSON YOU CAN TALK TO ABOUT HIM, RIGHT?
OR...
...IS IT THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT KATSURAGI TO AN ISHIZAKI?

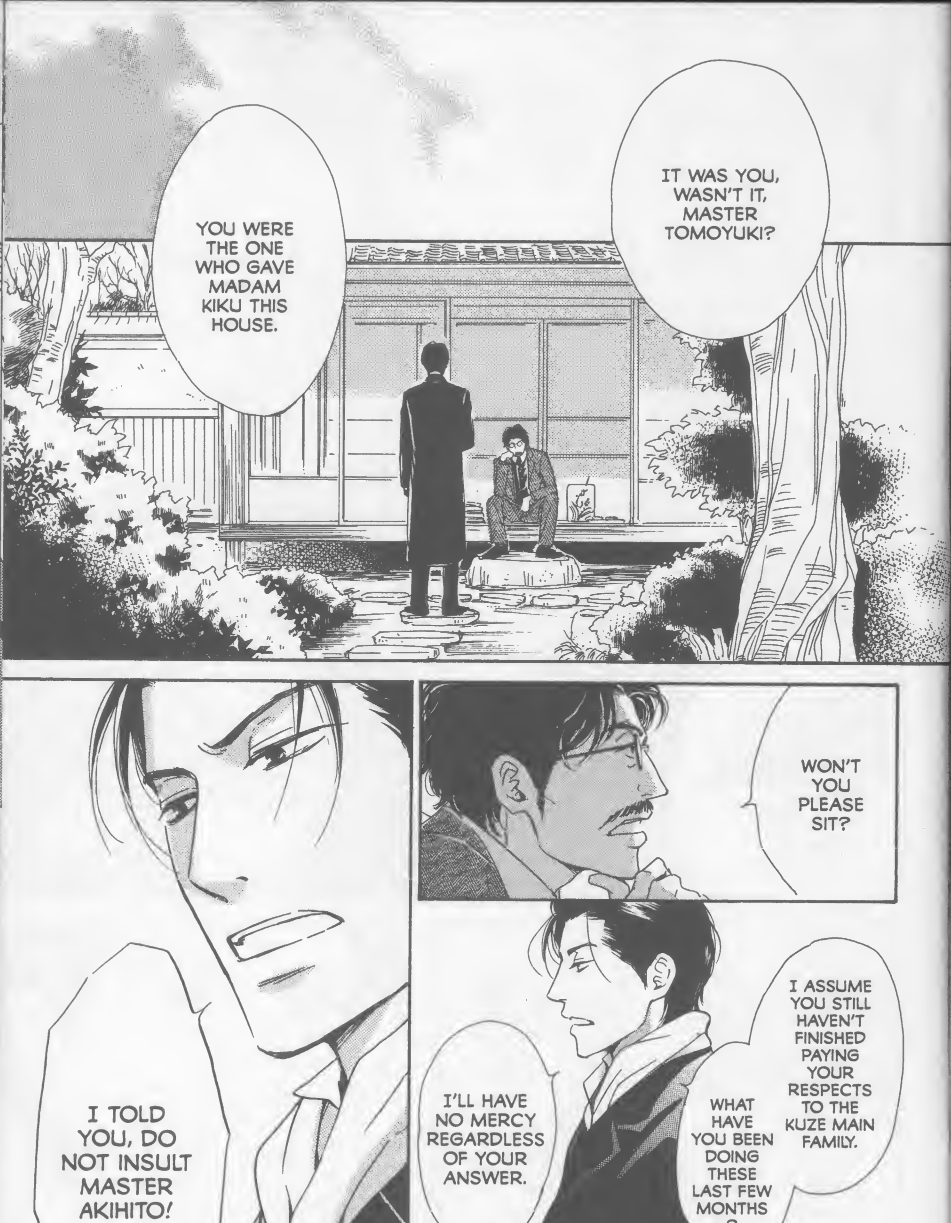

...ENOUGH.
IT'S NOTHING TO GET EXCITED OVER.
ANY POSSIBLE ENGAGEMENT WON'T HAPPEN FOR A WHILE YET.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I'LL BE ABLE TO GET PERMISSION FROM ABOVE, ANYWAY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

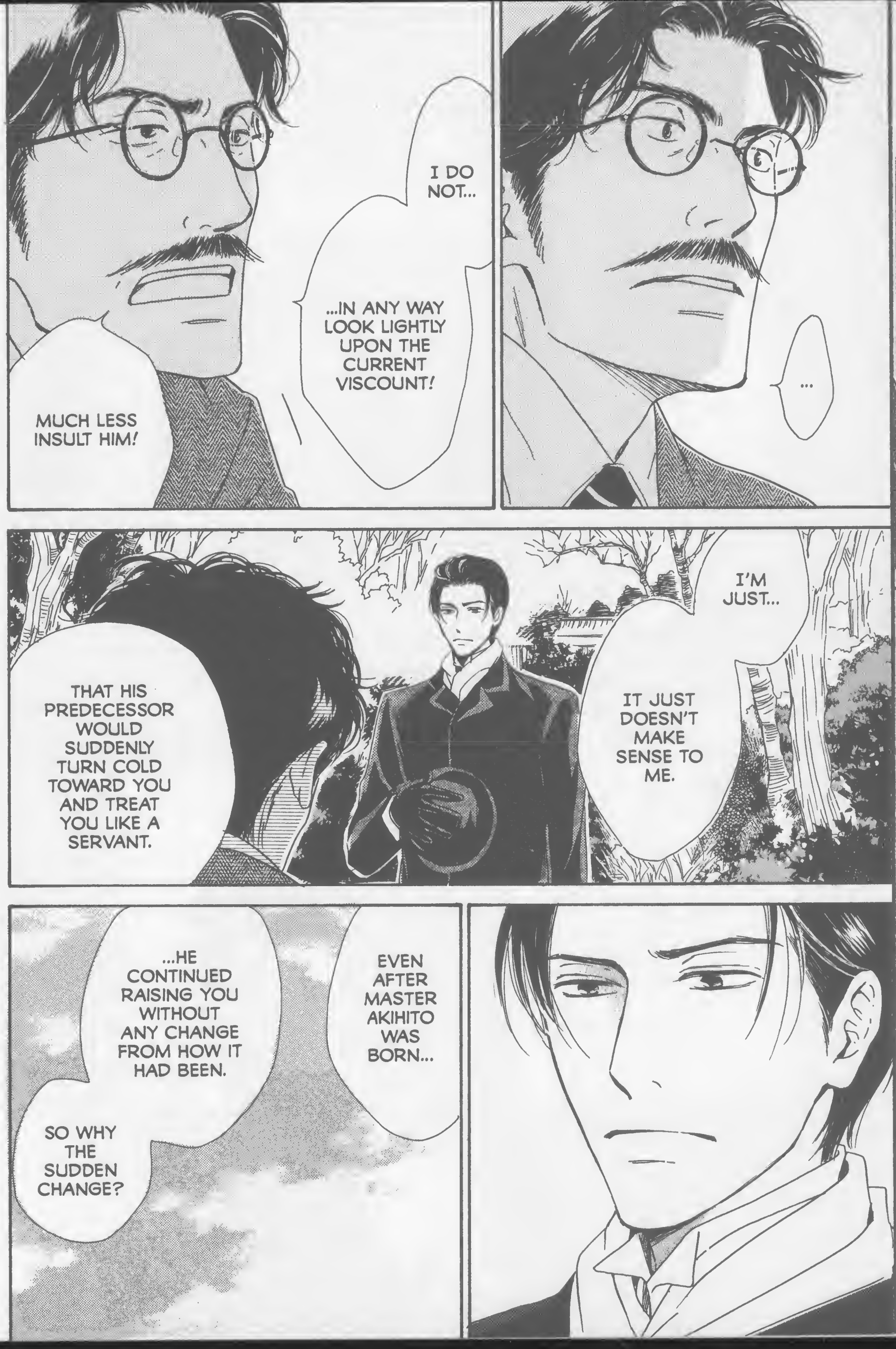

YOU KNOW THIS, RIGHT?
THE NOBILITY AREN'T FREE TO MARRY AS WE PLEASE. WE NEED PERMISSION FOR EVERYTHING.
I'D LIKE TO GO AND ASK AT COURT RIGHT AWAY, BUT...
THIS IS THE HOUSE OF DUKE SAJO.
AND THAT PRESTIGIOUS FAMILY MARRYING INTO A VISCOUNT FAMILY, A FAMILY WITH A FAR LOWER RANKING, IS AN EXCEPTION AMONG EXCEPTIONS.
I EXPECT IT'LL TAKE QUITE A WHILE BEFORE I CAN GET AN IMPERIAL SANCTION.

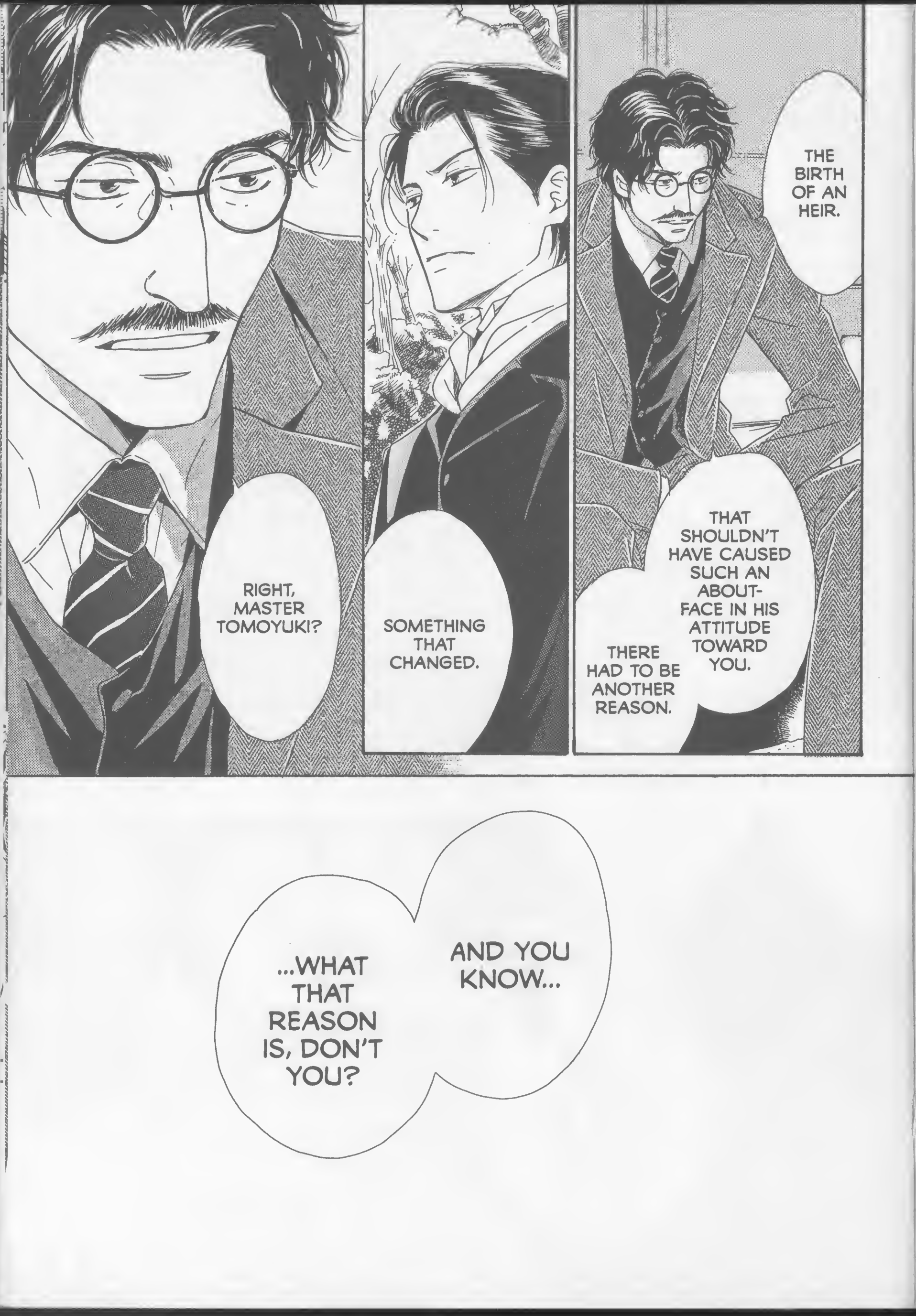

ANYWAY...
I PLAN TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN WHILE I'M WAITING.
INCLUDING CREATING A NETWORK IN THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT.
TO RAISE YOUR RANK...
YOU NEED THE ASSETS OF THE ISHIZAKI FAMILY. IS THAT IT THEN?
EXACTLY.
...
AND YOU'D LET GO OF KATSURAGI FOR THAT?
...
ISHIZAKI.
WHAT WAS THE MESSAGE?
HUH?
YOU SAID BEFORE YOU HAD ONE.

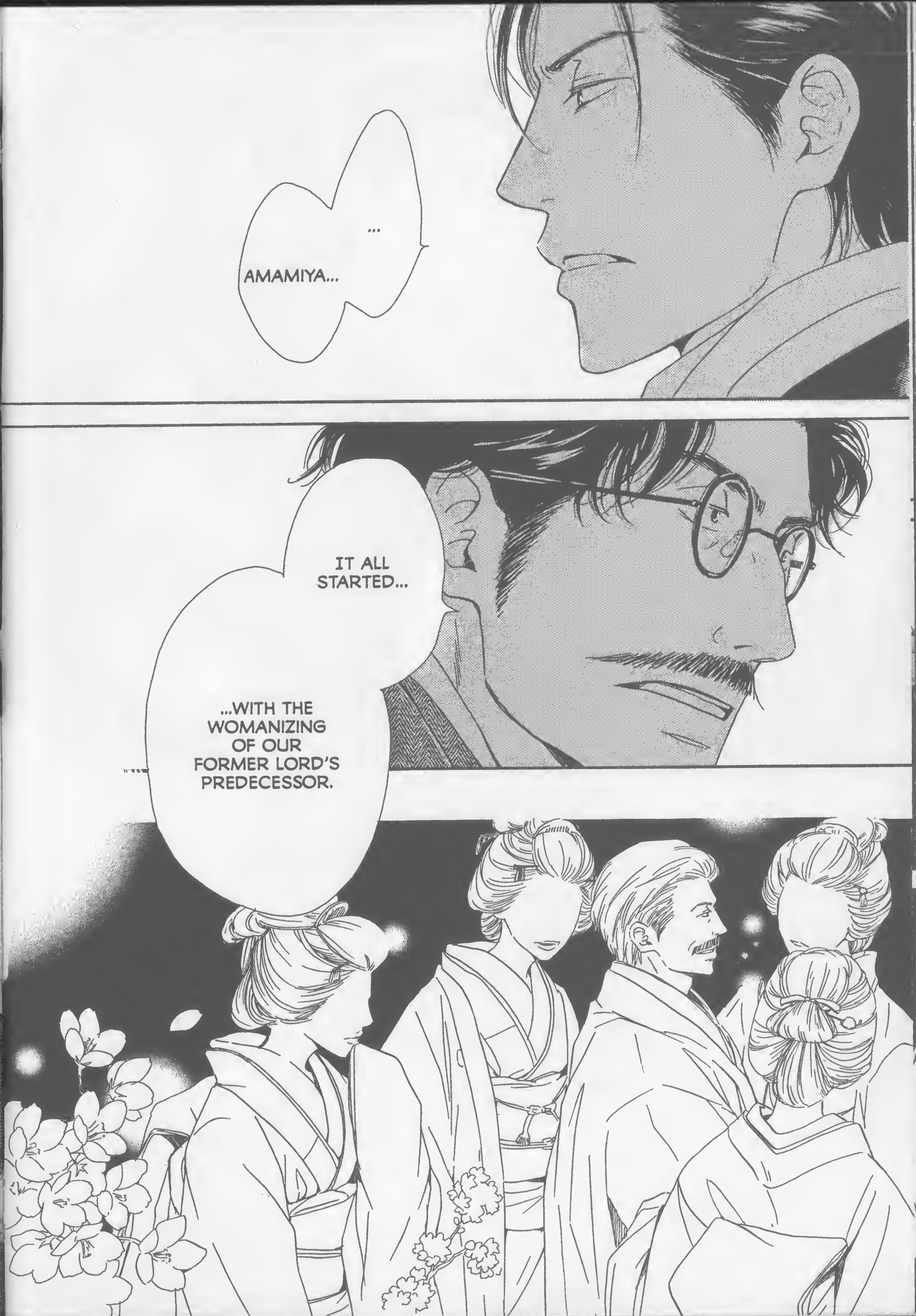

I WILL HEAR IT NOW, AFTER ALL. WHO'S IT FROM?
YOUR FATHER?
NO...
THE MASTER OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE.
TAKAYUKI KATSURAGI.
!
MASTER TOMOYUKI.
I WAS ORDERED BY THE FORMER VISCOUNT, MASTER AKINAO, TO BURN THESE DOCUMENTS.

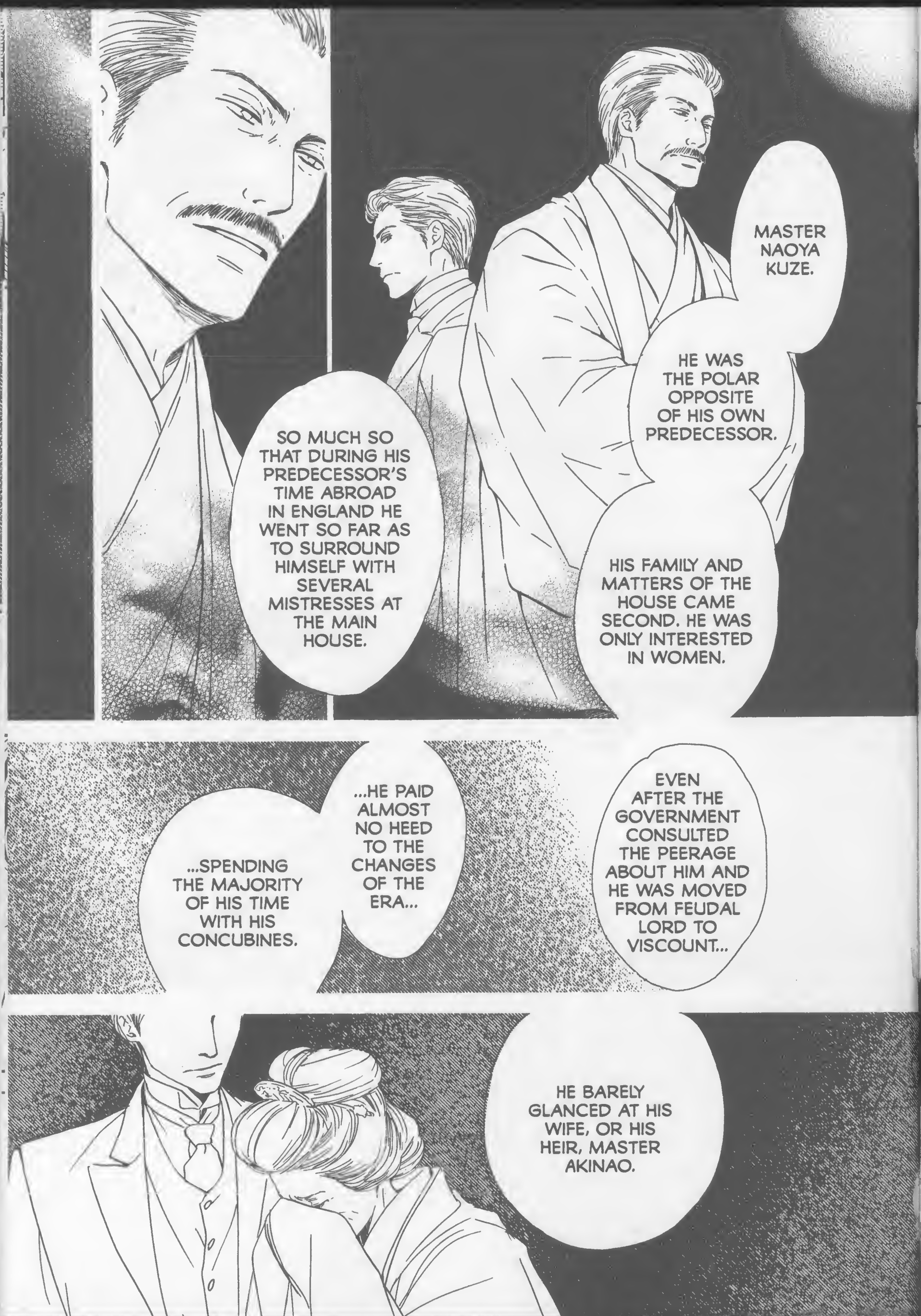

BUT...
...I WAS ALSO ORDERED BY HIS PREDECESSOR, MASTER NAOYA KUZE, TO PROTECT THEM WITH MY LIFE.
SINCE IT WAS LORD NAOYA WHO EMPLOYED ME...
...I COULD NOT DISPOSE OF THESE DOCUMENTS IN THE FIRE.
PLEASE...
IF, IN THE FUTURE, BY SOME REMOTE CHANCE THESE PROVE USEFUL TO YOU, PLEASE USE THEM AS YOU SEE FIT, MASTER TOMOYUKI.

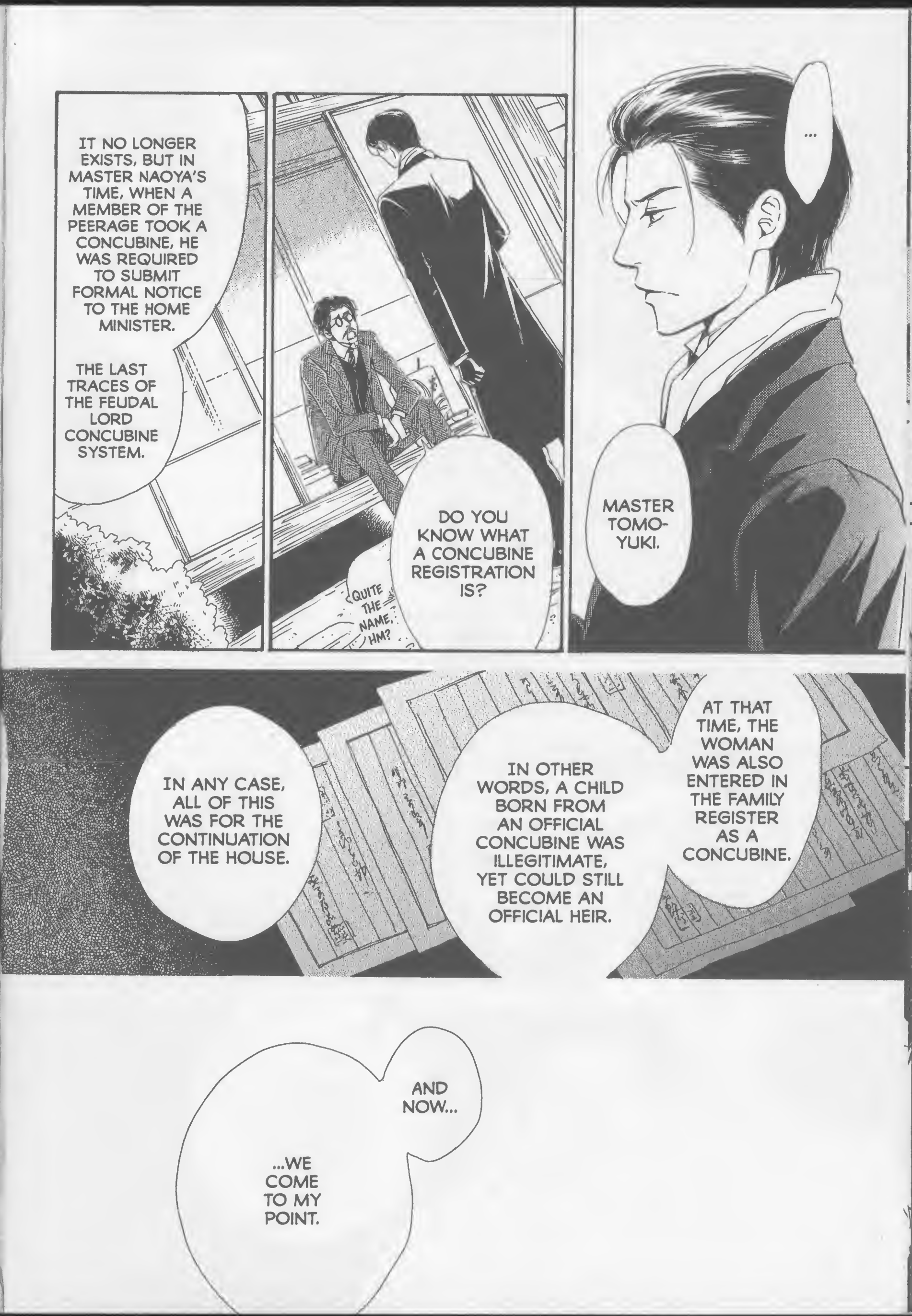

IT WAS YOU, WASN'T IT, MASTER TOMOYUKI?
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO GAVE MADAM KIKU THIS HOUSE.
WON'T YOU PLEASE SIT?
I ASSUME YOU STILL HAVEN'T FINISHED PAYING YOUR RESPECTS TO THE KUZE MAIN FAMILY.
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING THESE LAST FEW MONTHS?
I'LL HAVE NO MERCY REGARDLESS OF YOUR ANSWER.
I TOLD YOU, DO NOT INSULT MASTER AKIHITO!

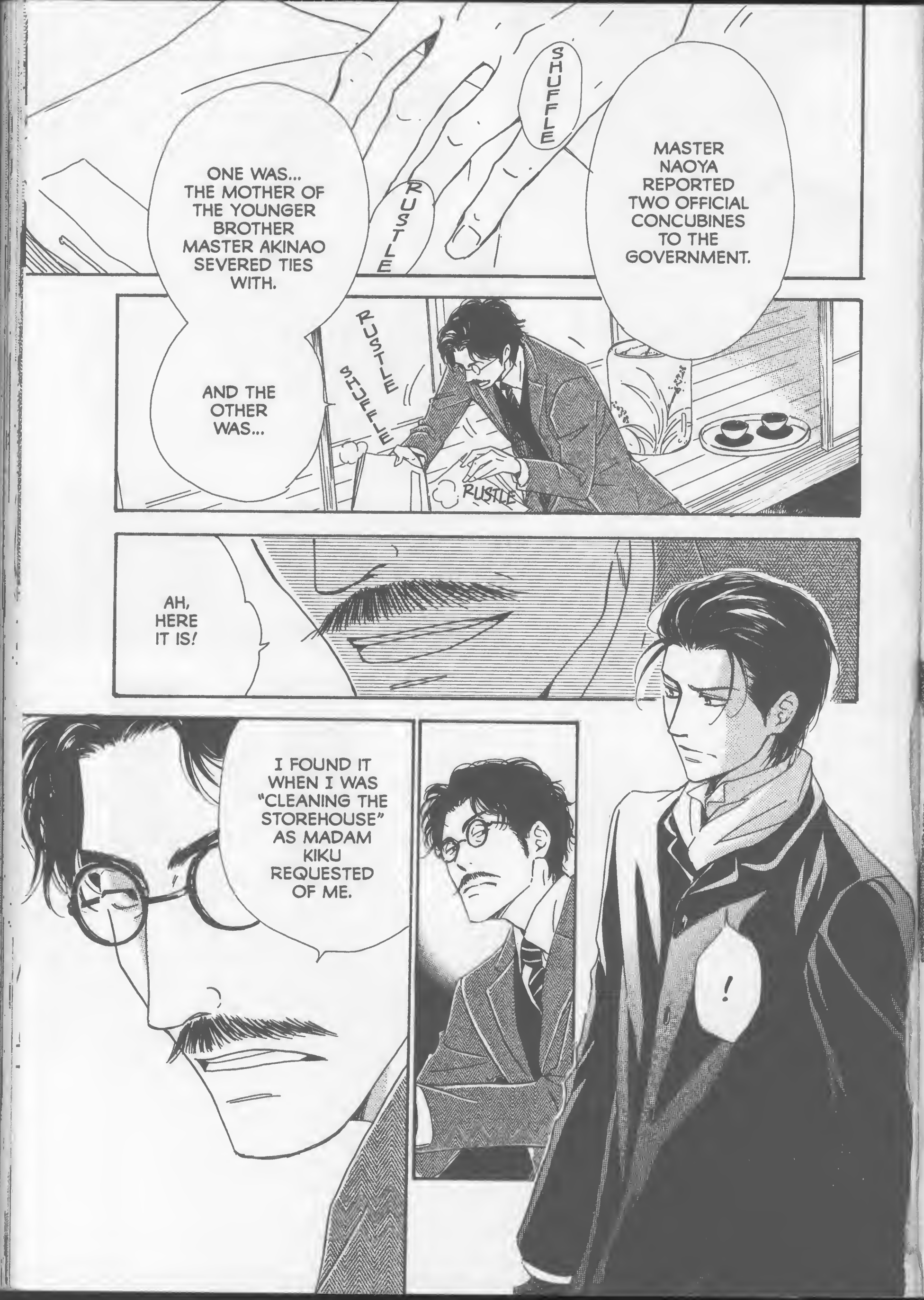

...
I DO NOT...
...IN ANY WAY LOOK LIGHTLY UPON THE CURRENT VISCOUNT!
MUCH LESS INSULT HIM!
I'M JUST...
IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO ME.
THAT HIS PREDECESSOR WOULD SUDDENLY TURN COLD TOWARD YOU AND TREAT YOU LIKE A SERVANT.
EVEN AFTER MASTER AKIHITO WAS BORN...
...HE CONTINUED RAISING YOU WITHOUT ANY CHANGE FROM HOW IT HAD BEEN.
SO WHY THE SUDDEN CHANGE?

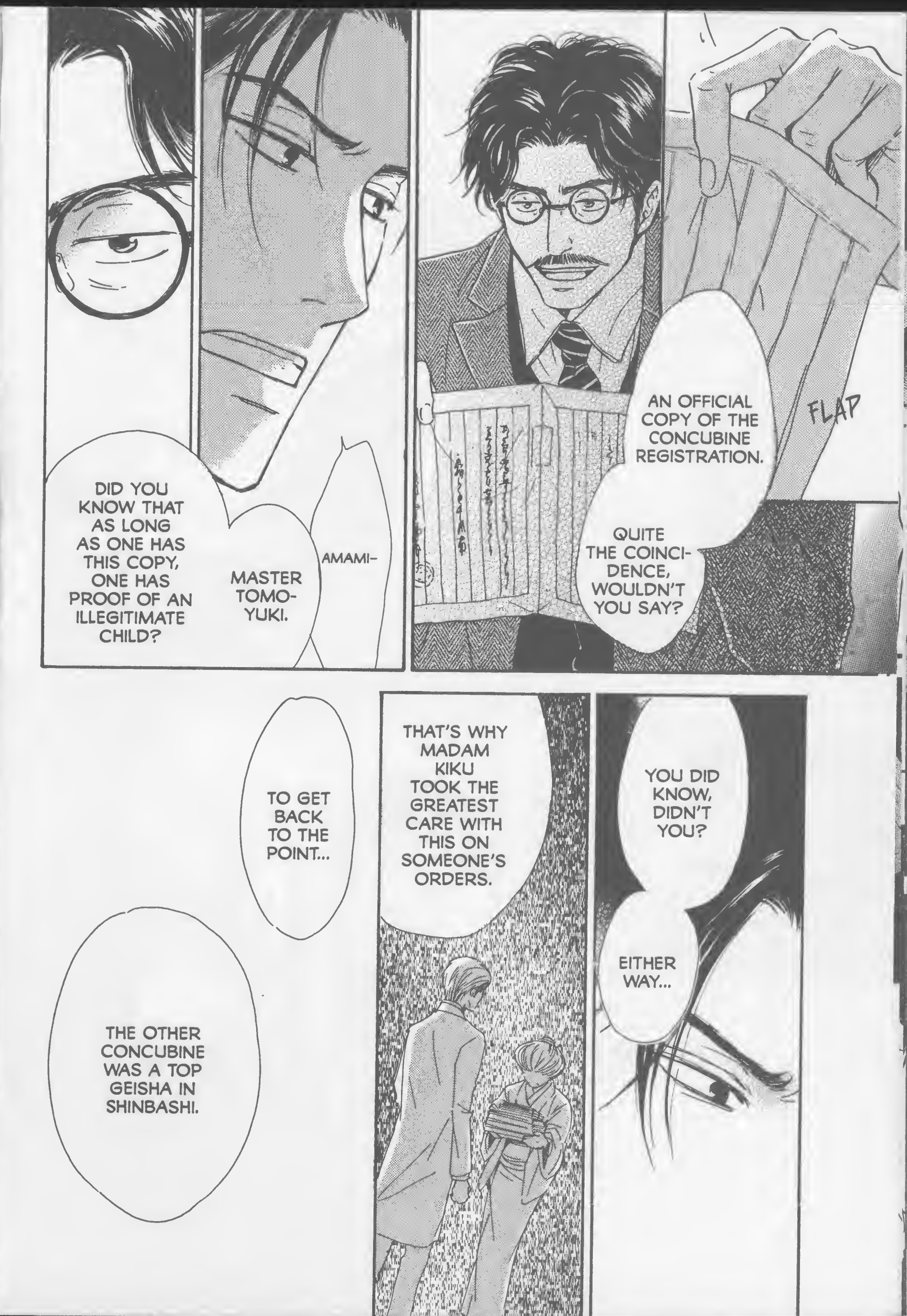

THE BIRTH OF AN HEIR.
THAT SHOULDN'T HAVE CAUSED SUCH AN ABOUT-FACE IN HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD YOU.
THERE HAD TO BE ANOTHER REASON.
SOMETHING THAT CHANGED.
RIGHT, MASTER TOMOYUKI?
AND YOU KNOW...
...WHAT THAT REASON IS, DON'T YOU?

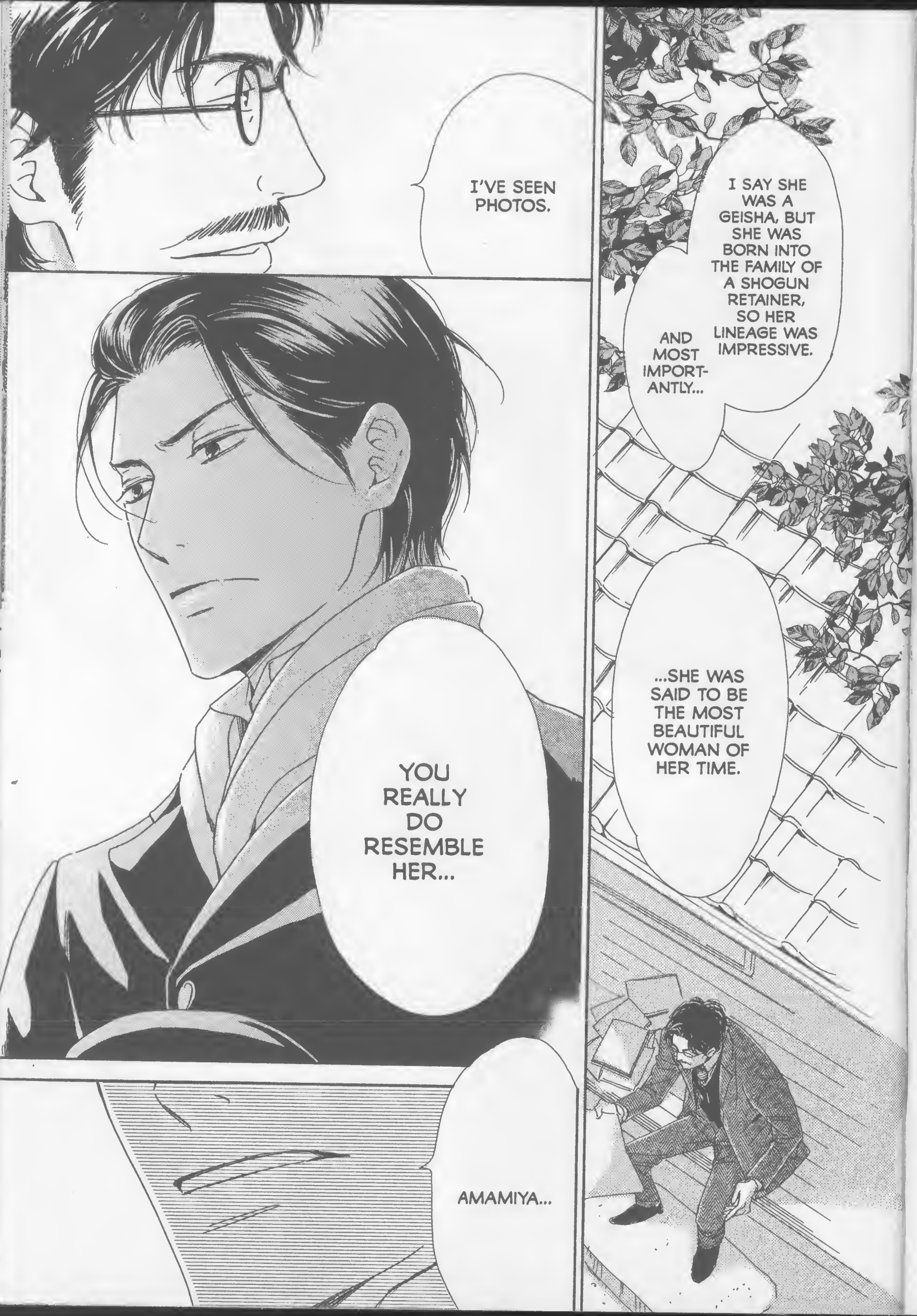

...
AMAMIYA...
IT ALL STARTED...
...WITH THE WOMANIZING OF OUR FORMER LORD'S PREDECESSOR.

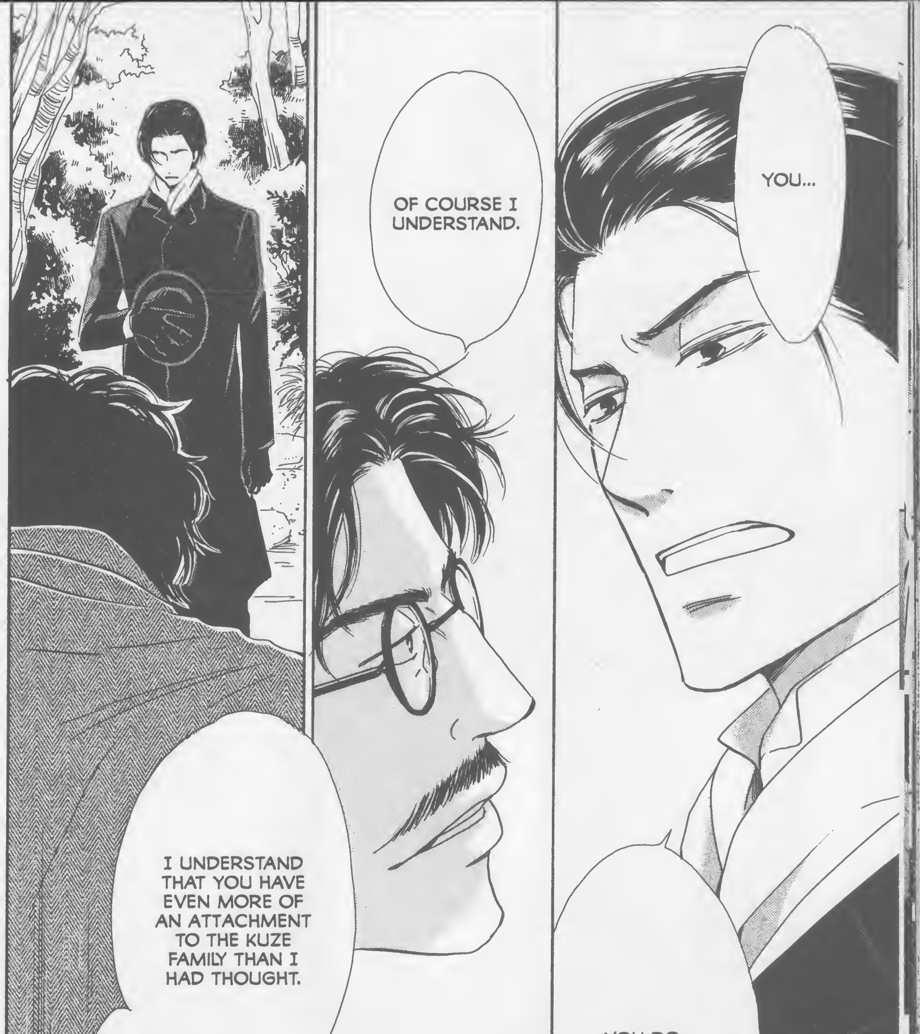

MASTER NAOYA KUZE.
HE WAS THE POLAR OPPOSITE OF HIS OWN PREDECESSOR.
HIS FAMILY AND MATTERS OF THE HOUSE CAME SECOND. HE WAS ONLY INTERESTED IN WOMEN.
SO MUCH SO THAT DURING HIS PREDECESSOR'S TIME ABROAD IN ENGLAND HE WENT SO FAR AS TO SURROUND HIMSELF WITH SEVERAL MISTRESSES AT THE MAIN HOUSE.
EVEN AFTER THE GOVERNMENT CONSULTED THE PEERAGE ABOUT HIM AND HE WAS MOVED FROM FEUDAL LORD TO VISCOUNT...
...HE PAID ALMOST NO HEED TO THE CHANGES OF THE ERA...
...SPENDING THE MAJORITY OF HIS TIME WITH HIS CONCUBINES.
HE BARELY GLANCED AT HIS WIFE, OR HIS HEIR, MASTER AKINAO.

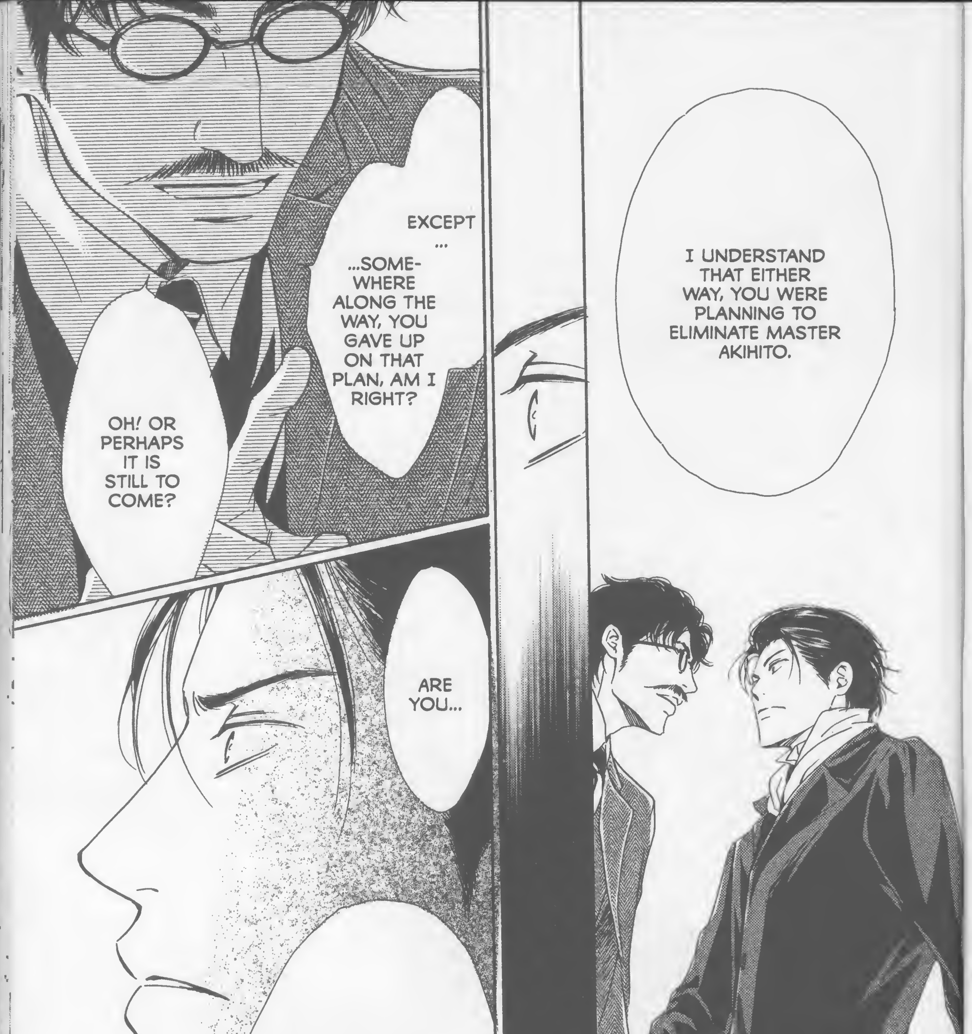

...
MASTER TOMOYUKI.
QUITE THE NAME, HM?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT A CONCUBINE REGISTRATION IS?
IT NO LONGER EXISTS, BUT IN MASTER NAOYA'S TIME, WHEN A MEMBER OF THE PEERAGE TOOK A CONCUBINE, HE WAS REQUIRED TO SUBMIT FORMAL NOTICE TO THE HOME MINISTER.
THE LAST TRACES OF THE FEUDAL LORD CONCUBINE SYSTEM.
AT THAT TIME, THE WOMAN WAS ALSO ENTERED IN THE FAMILY REGISTER AS A CONCUBINE.
IN OTHER WORDS, A CHILD BORN FROM AN OFFICIAL CONCUBINE WAS ILLEGITIMATE, YET COULD STILL BECOME AN OFFICIAL HEIR.
IN ANY CASE, ALL OF THIS WAS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE HOUSE.
AND NOW...
...WE COME TO MY POINT.

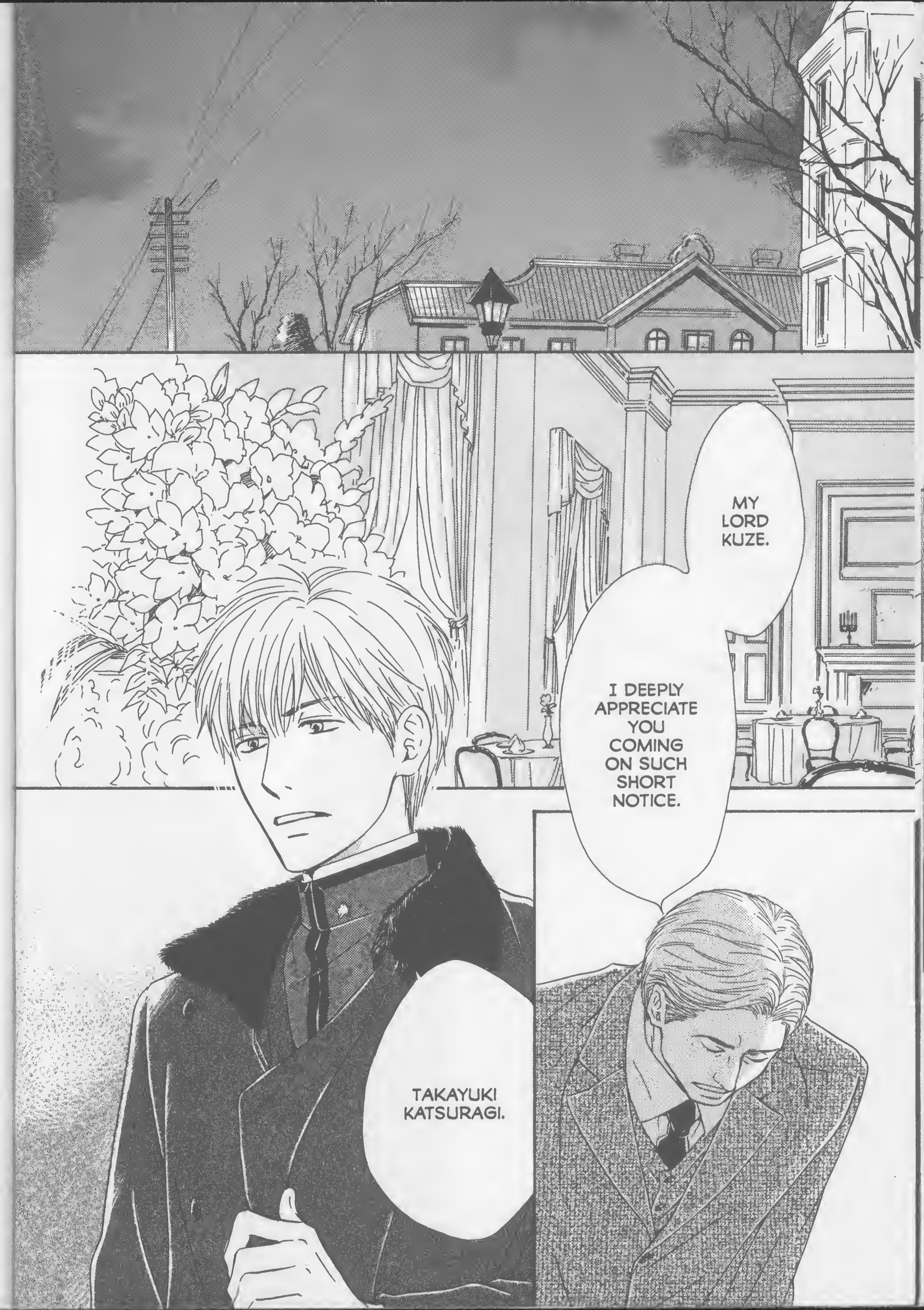

SHUFFLE
MASTER NAOYA REPORTED TWO OFFICIAL CONCUBINES TO THE GOVERNMENT.
RUSTLE
ONE WAS... THE MOTHER OF THE YOUNGER BROTHER MASTER AKINAO SEVERED TIES WITH.
RUSTLE
SHUFFLE
AND THE OTHER WAS...
RUSTLE
AH, HERE IT IS!
!
I FOUND IT WHEN I WAS "CLEANING THE STOREHOUSE" AS MADAM KIKU REQUESTED OF ME.

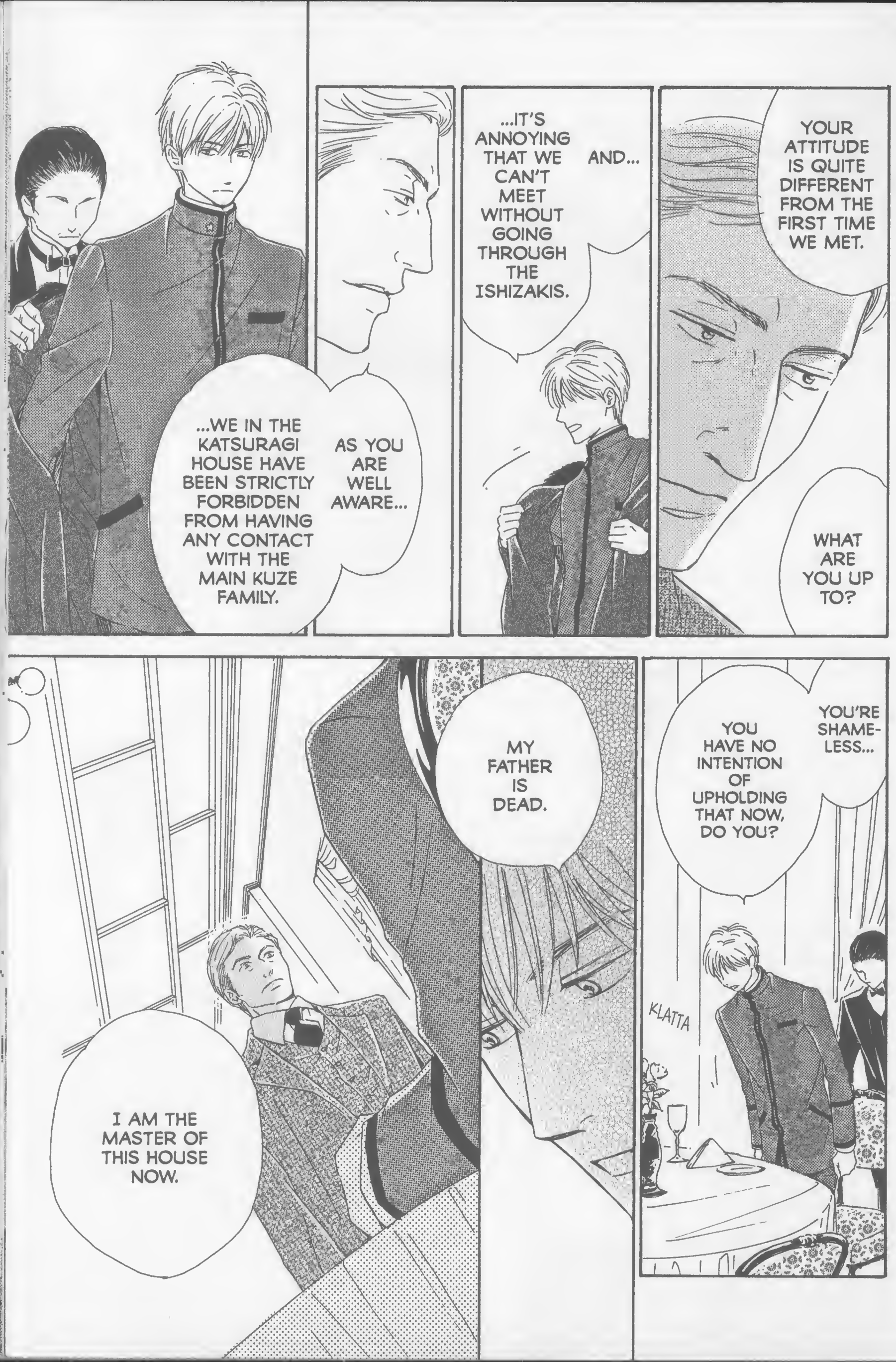

AN OFFICIAL COPY OF THE CONCUBINE REGISTRATION.
FLAP
QUITE THE COINCIDENCE, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?
AMAMI-
MASTER TOMOYUKI.
DID YOU KNOW THAT AS LONG AS ONE HAS THIS COPY, ONE HAS PROOF OF AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD?
YOU DID KNOW, DIDN'T YOU?
EITHER WAY...
THAT'S WHY MADAM KIKU TOOK THE GREATEST CARE WITH THIS ON SOMEONE'S ORDERS.
TO GET BACK TO THE POINT...
THE OTHER CONCUBINE WAS A TOP GEISHA IN SHINBASHI.

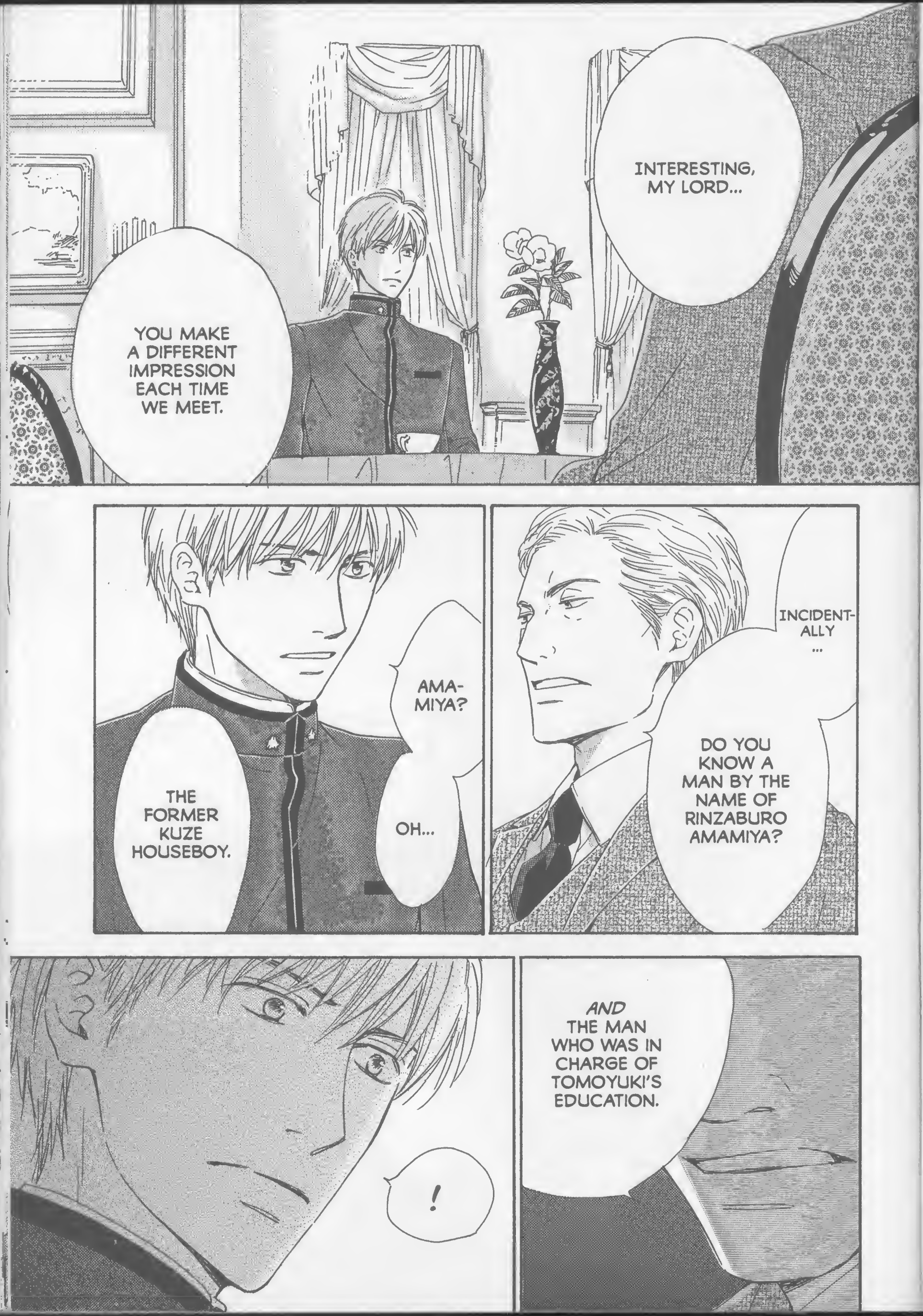

I SAY SHE WAS A GEISHA, BUT SHE WAS BORN INTO THE FAMILY OF A SHOGUN RETAINER, SO HER LINEAGE WAS IMPRESSIVE.
AND MOST IMPORTANTLY...
...SHE WAS SAID TO BE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN OF HER TIME.
I'VE SEEN PHOTOS.
YOU REALLY DO RESEMBLE HER...
AMAMIYA...

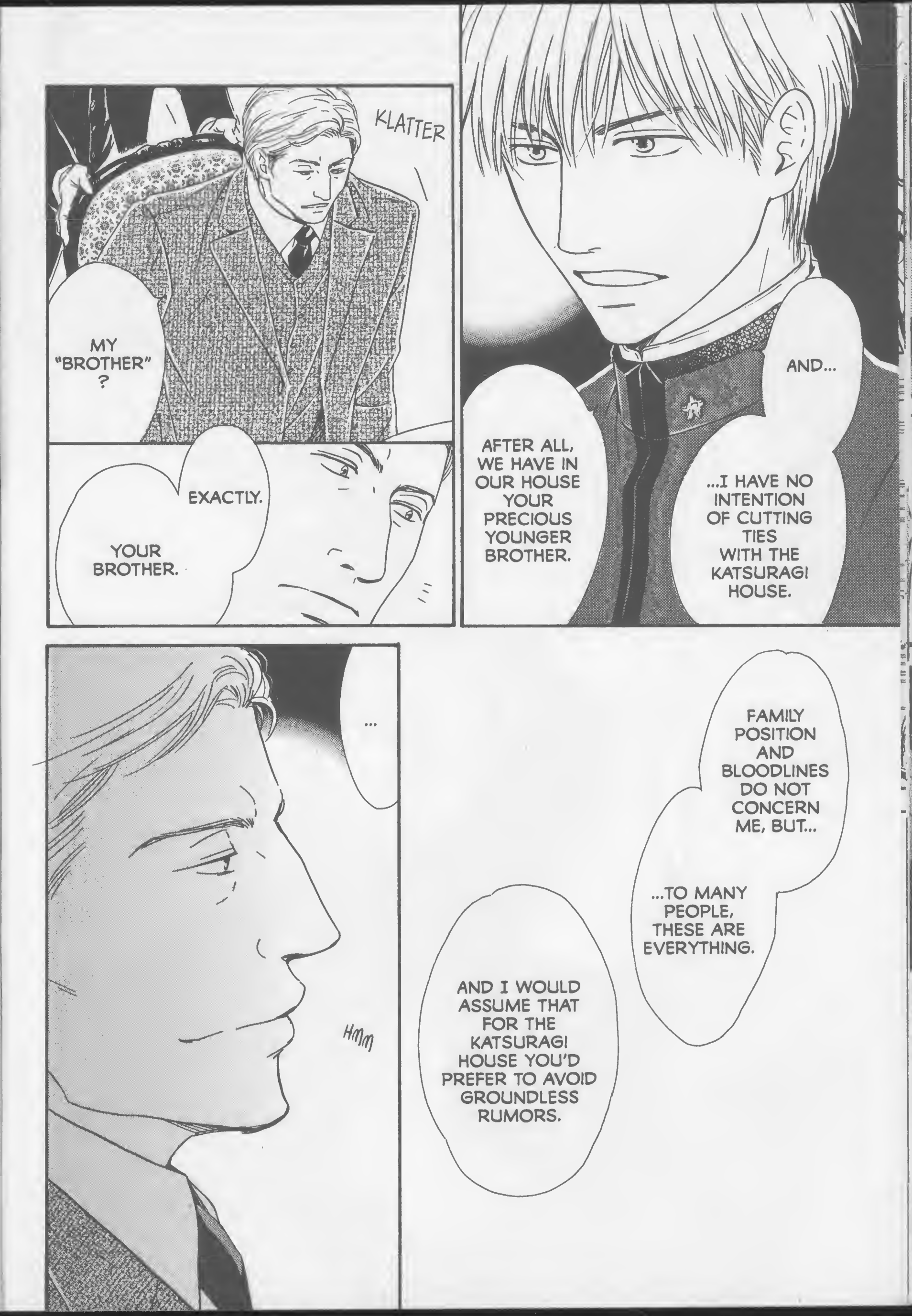

YOU...
YOU DO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING HERE.
OF COURSE I UNDERSTAND.
I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE EVEN MORE OF AN ATTACHMENT TO THE KUZE FAMILY THAN I HAD THOUGHT.
AND...
KLATTER

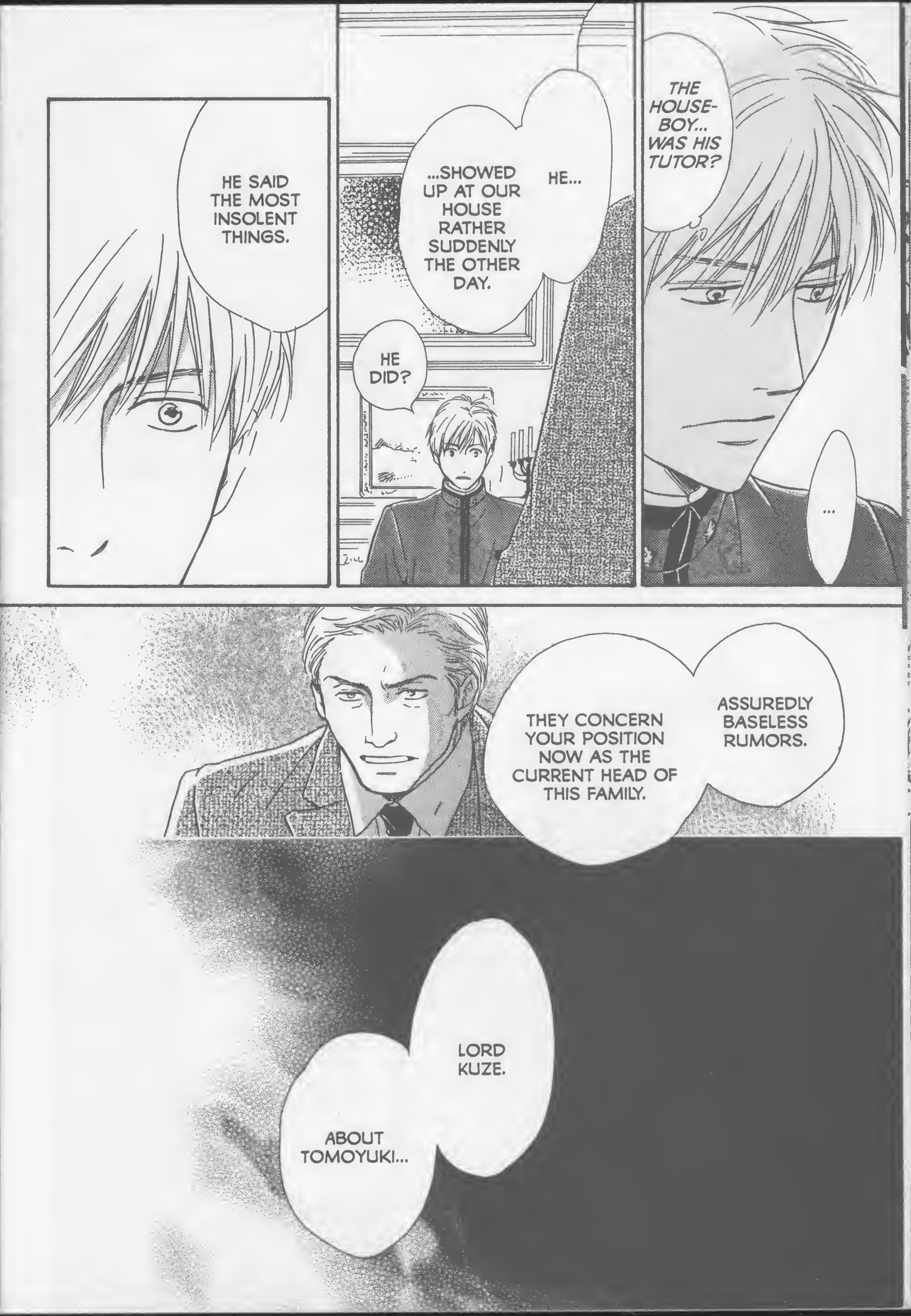

I UNDERSTAND THAT EITHER WAY, YOU WERE PLANNING TO ELIMINATE MASTER AKIHITO.
EXCEPT...
...SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, YOU GAVE UP ON THAT PLAN, AM I RIGHT?
OH! OR PERHAPS IT IS STILL TO COME?
ARE YOU...
...INTENDING TO TURN EVERYTHING ON ITS HEAD?

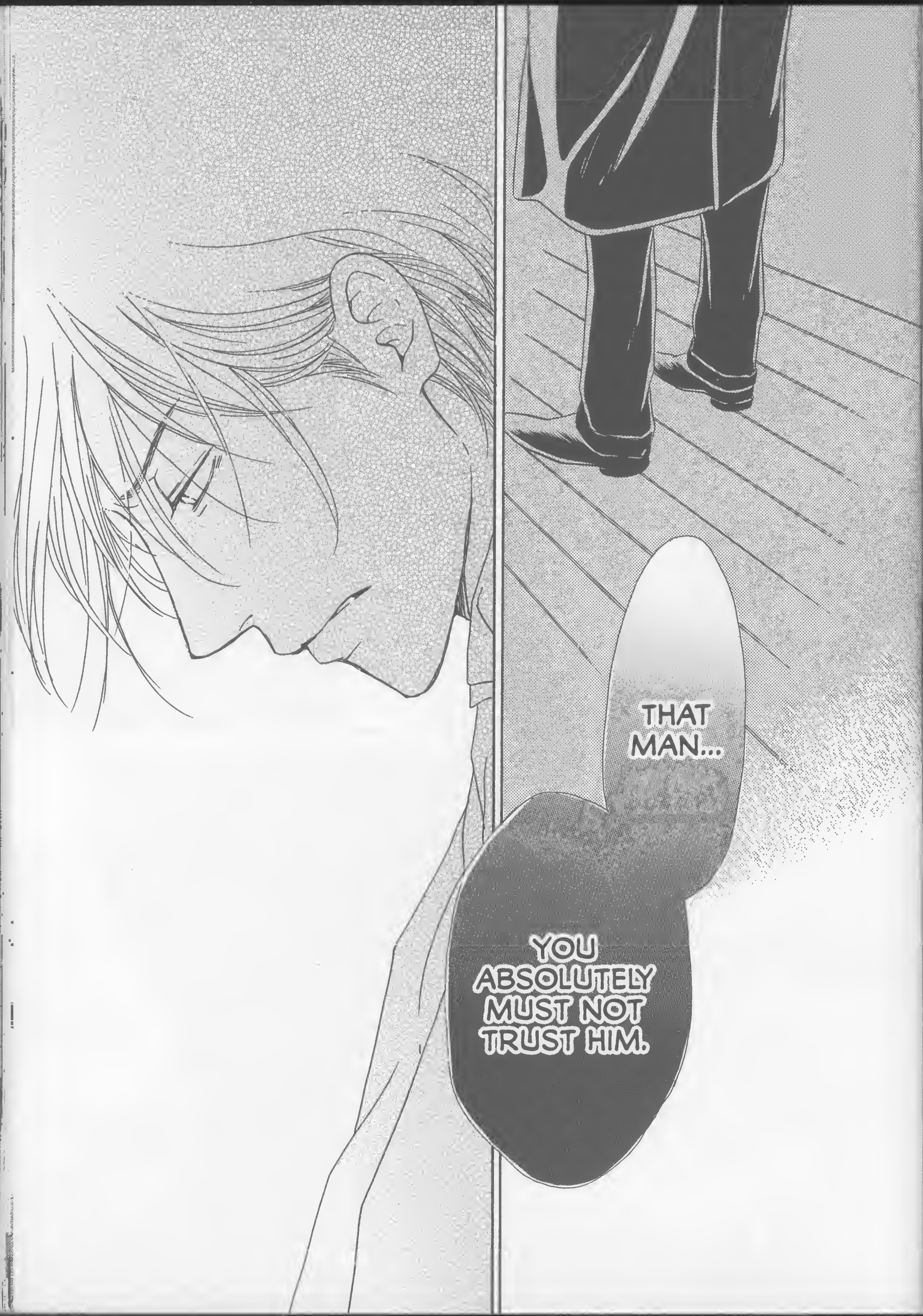

MY LORD KUZE.
I DEEPLY APPRECIATE YOU COMING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE.
TAKAYUKI KATSURAGI.

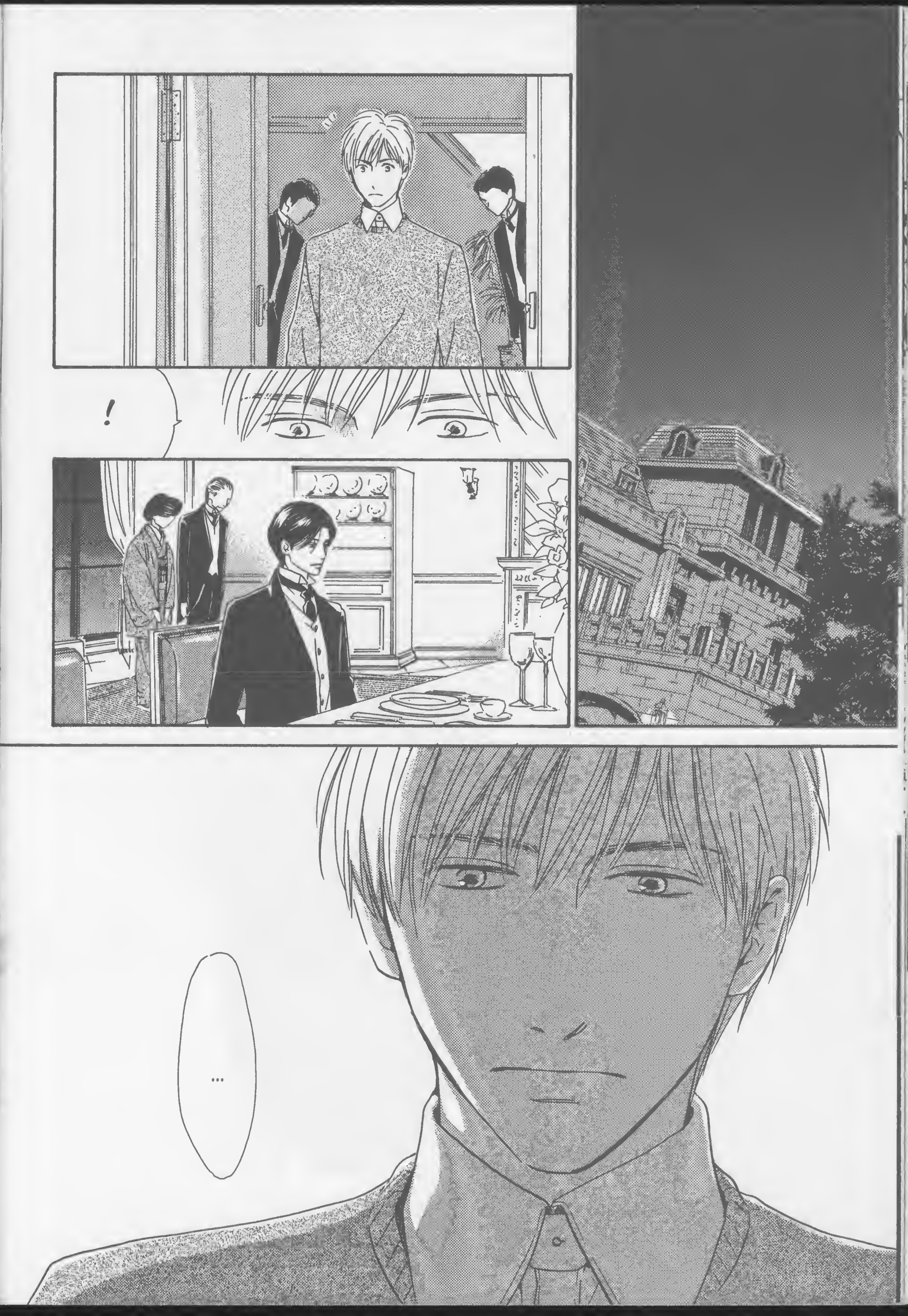

YOUR ATTITUDE IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE FIRST TIME WE MET.
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
AND...
...IT'S ANNOYING THAT WE CAN'T MEET WITHOUT GOING THROUGH THE ISHIZAKIS.
AS YOU ARE WELL AWARE...
...WE IN THE KATSURAGI HOUSE HAVE BEEN STRICTLY FORBIDDEN FROM HAVING ANY CONTACT WITH THE MAIN KUZE FAMILY.
YOU'RE SHAMELESS...
YOU HAVE NO INTENTION OF UPHOLDING THAT NOW, DO YOU?
KLATTA
MY FATHER IS DEAD.
I AM THE MASTER OF THIS HOUSE NOW.

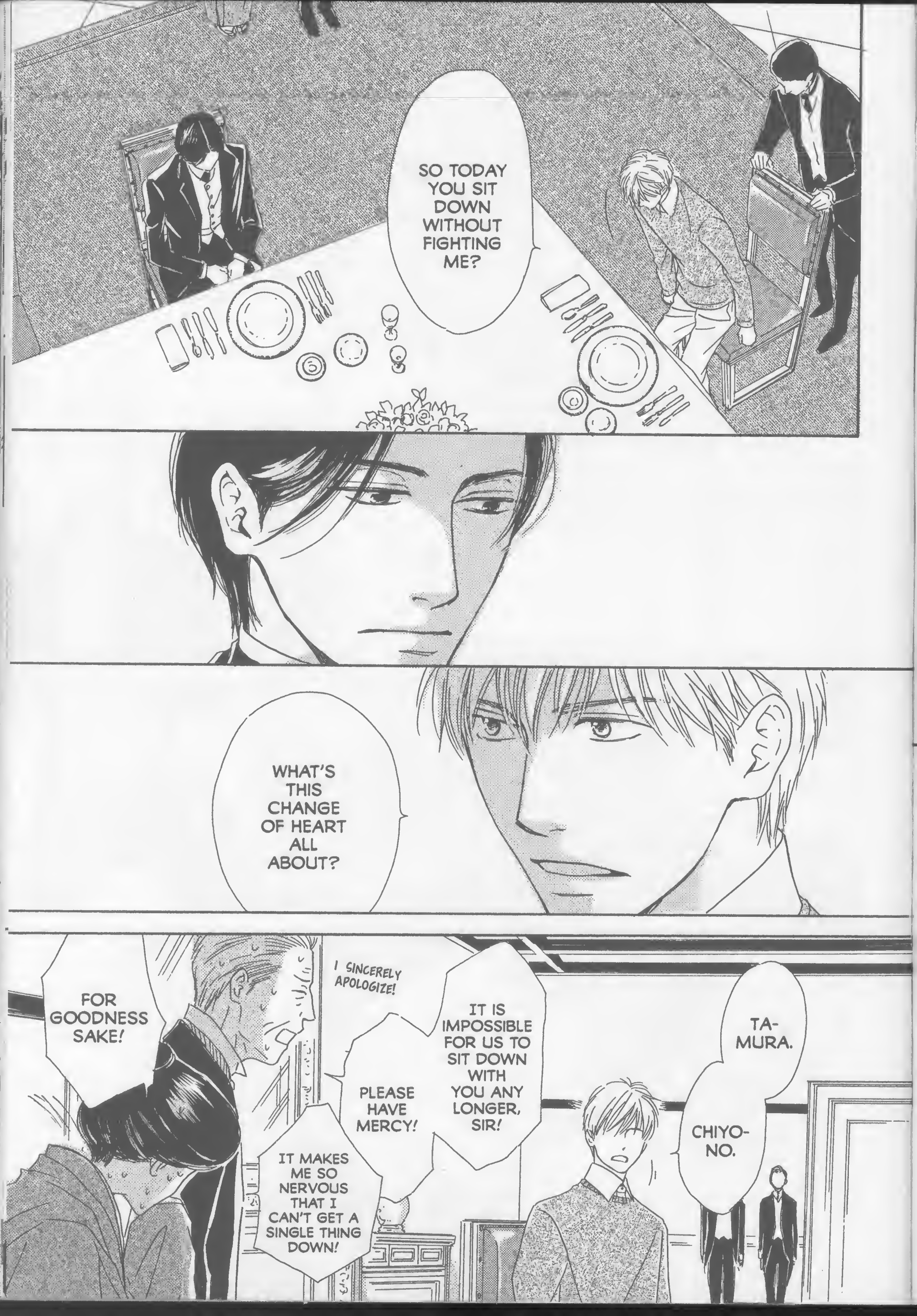

INTERESTING, MY LORD...
YOU MAKE A DIFFERENT IMPRESSION EACH TIME WE MEET.
INCIDENTALLY...
DO YOU KNOW A MAN BY THE NAME OF RINZABURO AMAMIYA?
AMAMIYA?
OH...
THE FORMER KUZE HOUSEBOY.
AND THE MAN WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF TOMOYUKI'S EDUCATION.
!

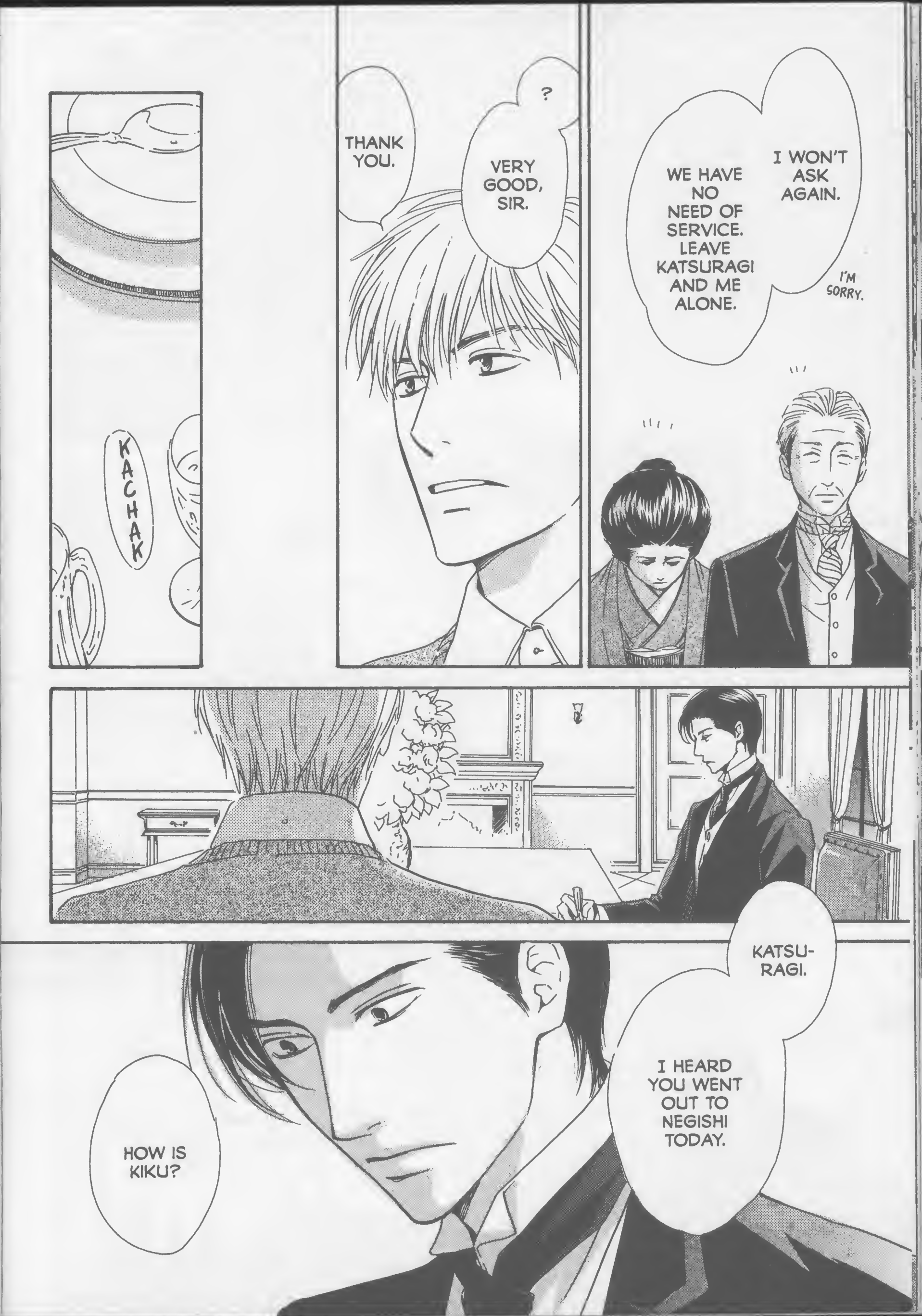

AND...
...I HAVE NO INTENTION OF CUTTING TIES WITH THE KATSURAGI HOUSE.
AFTER ALL, WE HAVE IN OUR HOUSE YOUR PRECIOUS YOUNGER BROTHER.
KLATTER
MY "BROTHER"?
EXACTLY.
YOUR BROTHER.
FAMILY POSITION AND BLOODLINES DO NOT CONCERN ME, BUT...
...TO MANY PEOPLE, THESE ARE EVERYTHING.
AND I WOULD ASSUME THAT FOR THE KATSURAGI HOUSE YOU'D PREFER TO AVOID GROUNDLESS RUMORS.
HMM
...

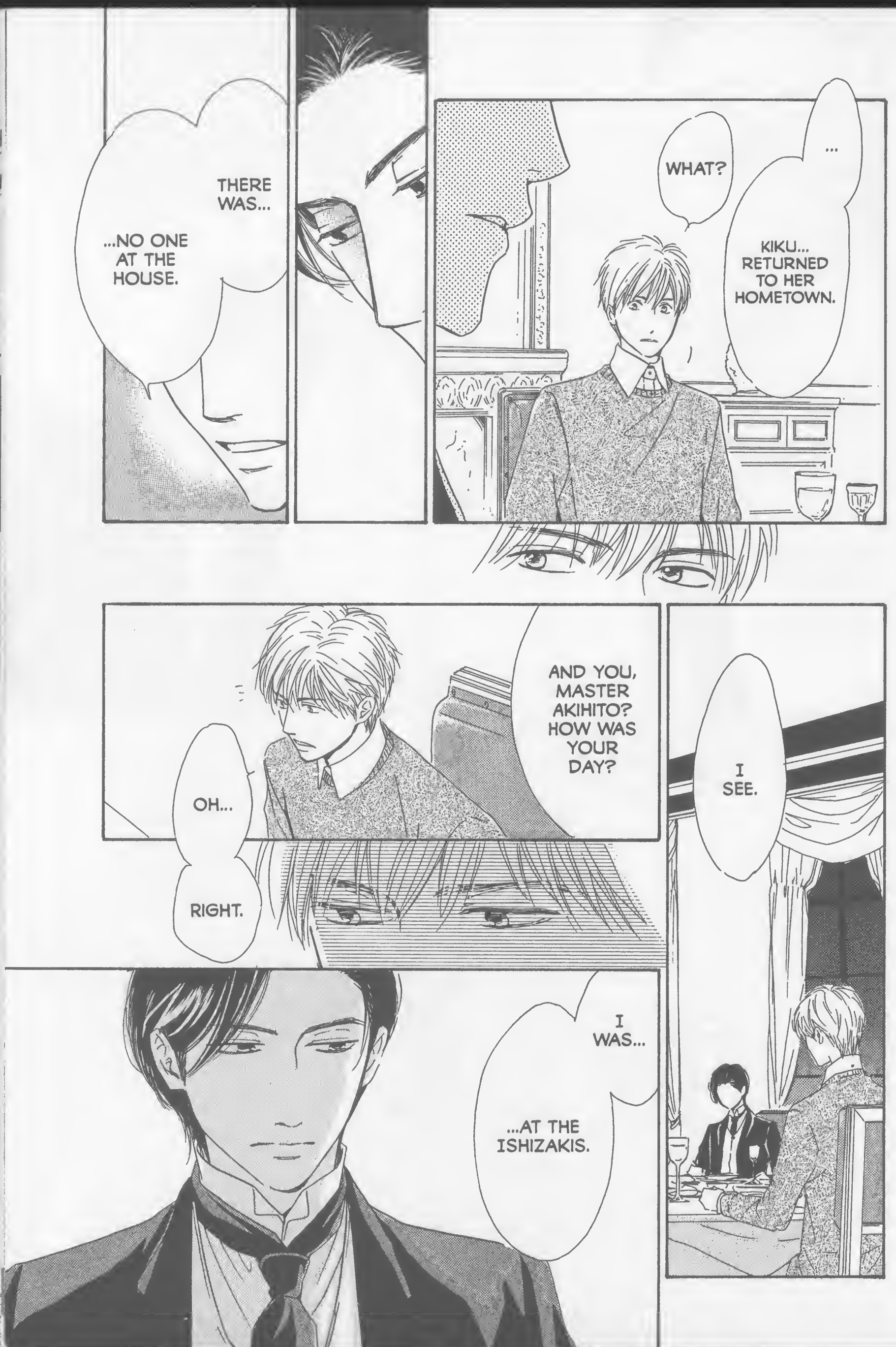

THE HOUSE-BOY... WAS HIS TUTOR?
...
HE...
...SHOWED UP AT OUR HOUSE RATHER SUDDENLY THE OTHER DAY.
HE DID?
HE SAID THE MOST INSOLENT THINGS.
ASSUREDLY BASELESS RUMORS.
THEY CONCERN YOUR POSITION NOW AS THE CURRENT HEAD OF THIS FAMILY.
LORD KUZE.
ABOUT TOMOYUKI...

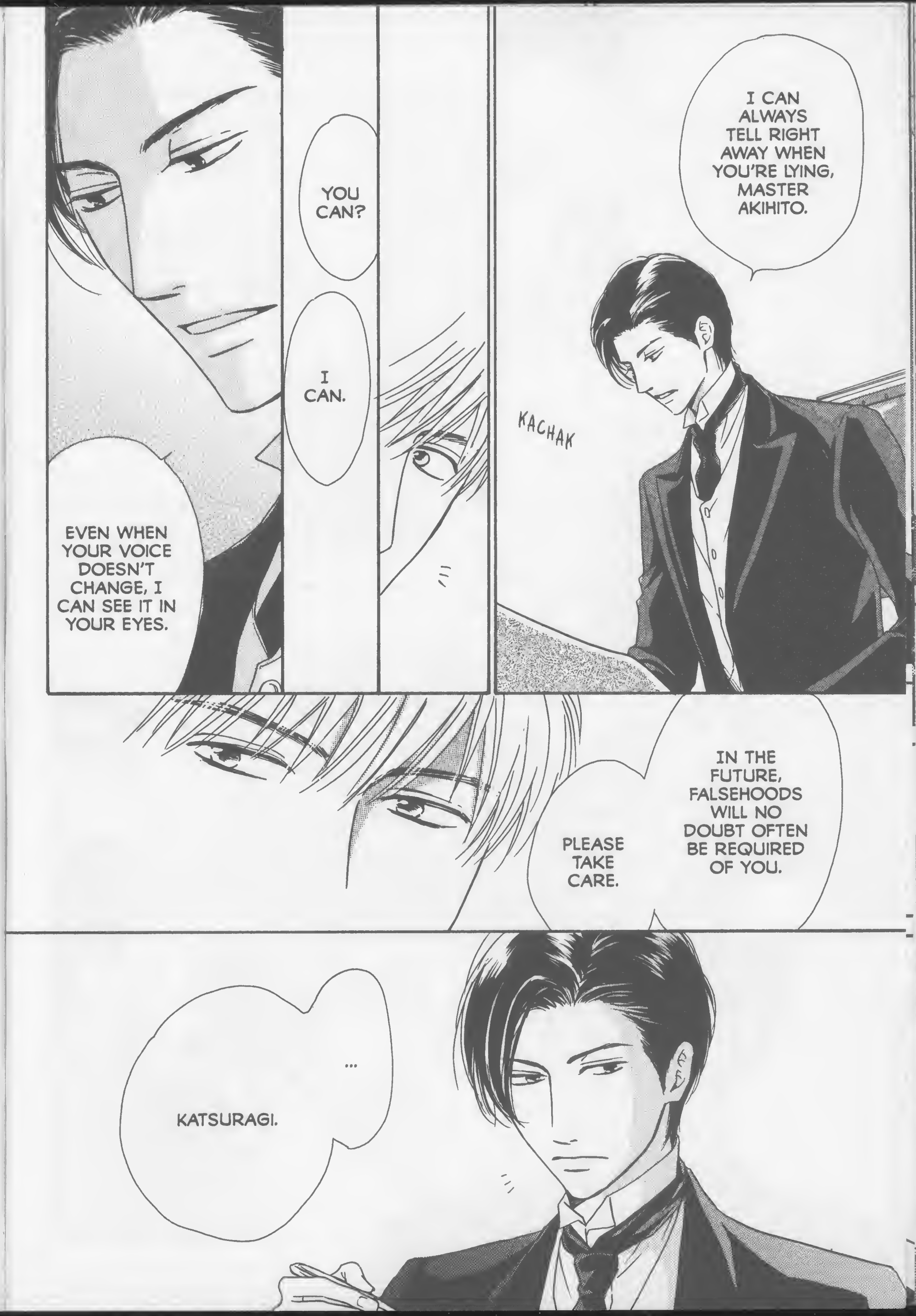
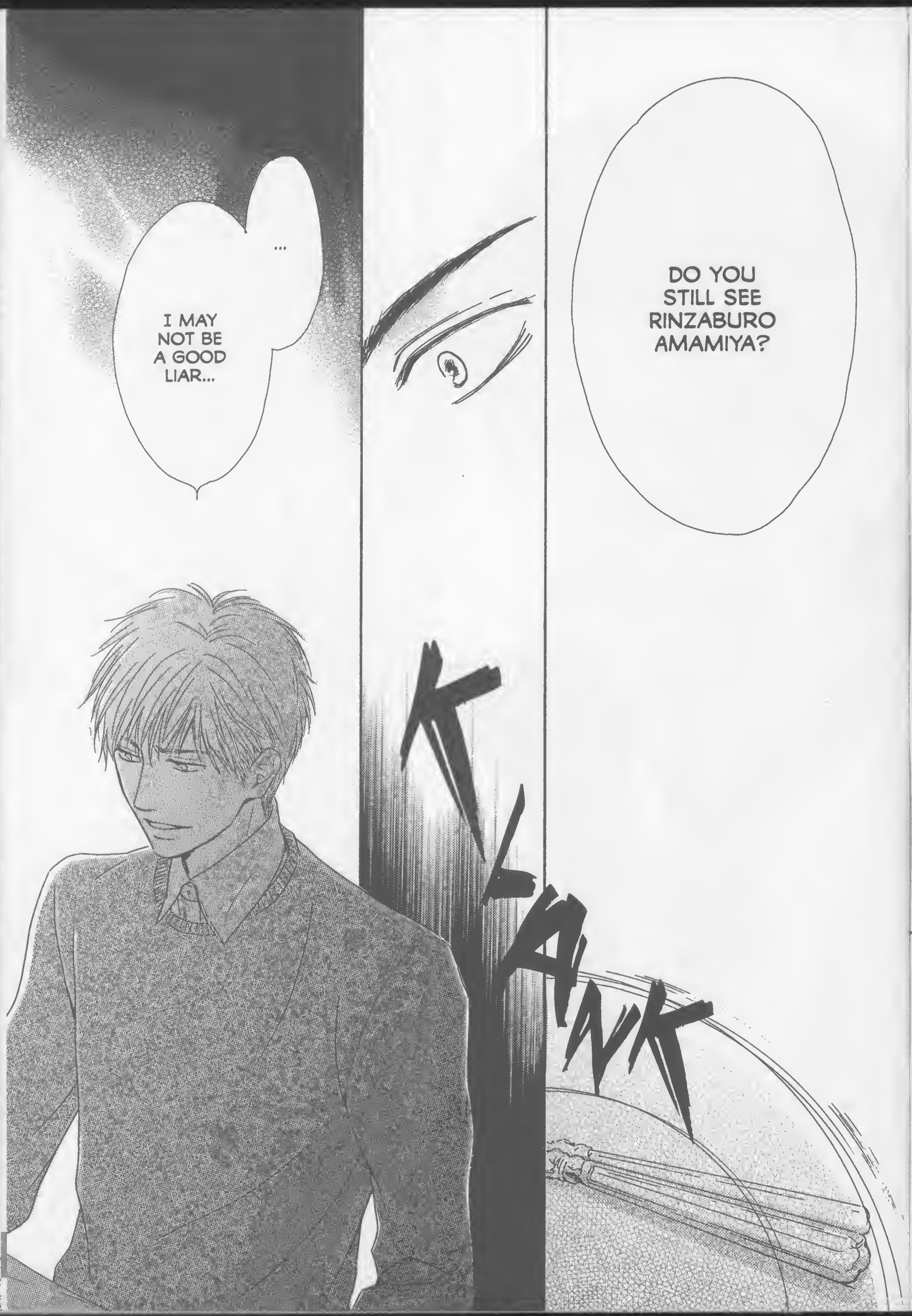

THAT MAN...
YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST NOT TRUST HIM.

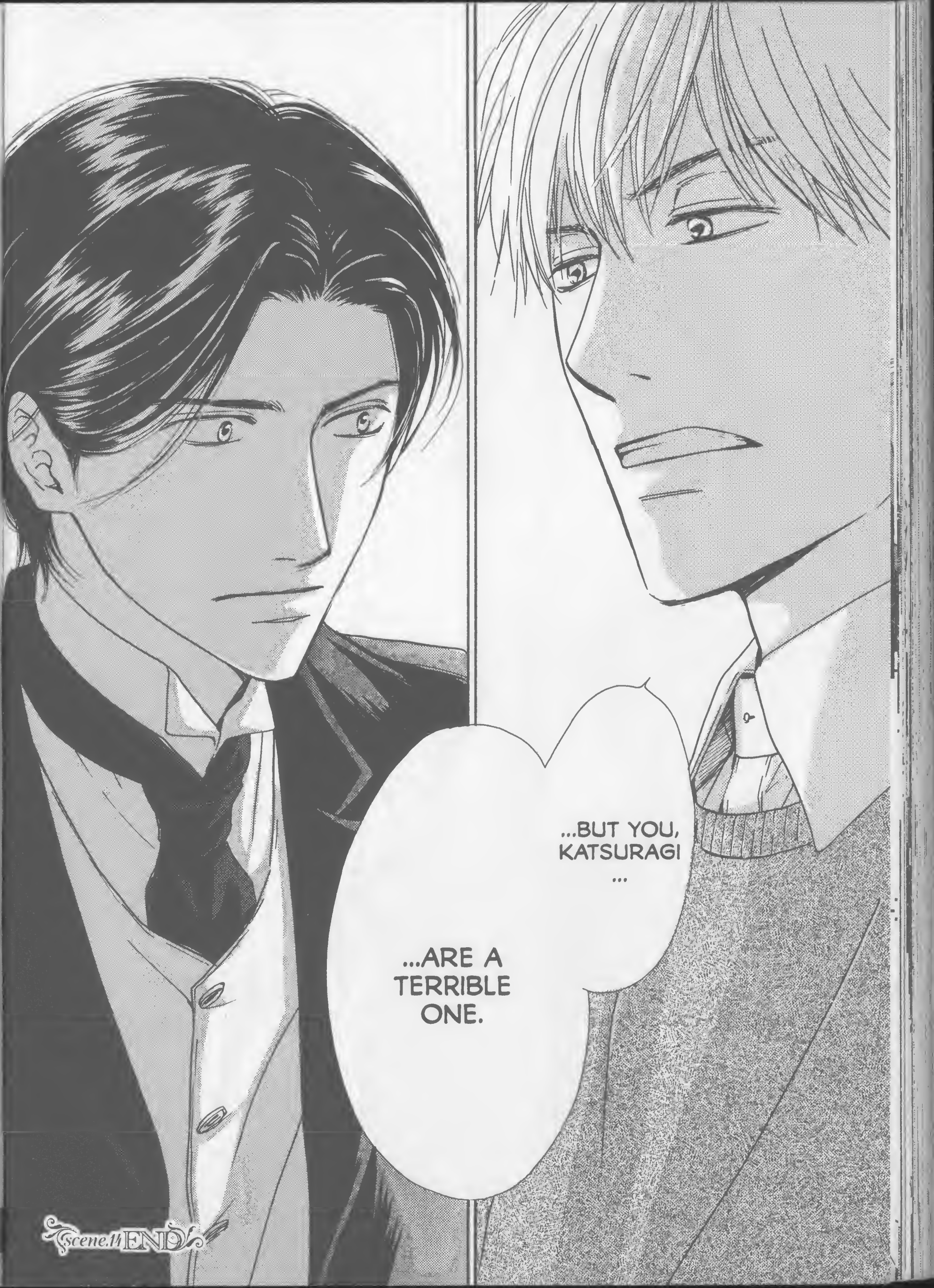

!
...


SO TODAY YOU SIT DOWN WITHOUT FIGHTING ME?
WHAT'S THIS CHANGE OF HEART ALL ABOUT?
TA-MURA.
CHIYO-NO.
I SINCERELY APOLOGIZE!
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO SIT DOWN WITH YOU ANY LONGER, SIR!
PLEASE HAVE MERCY!
IT MAKES ME SO NERVOUS THAT I CAN'T GET A SINGLE THING DOWN!
FOR GOODNESS SAKE!


I WON'T ASK AGAIN.
I'M SORRY.
WE HAVE NO NEED OF SERVICE. LEAVE KATSURAGI AND ME ALONE.
?
VERY GOOD, SIR.
THANK YOU.
KACHAK
KATSU-RAGI.
I HEARD YOU WENT OUT TO NEGISHI TODAY.
HOW IS KIKU?

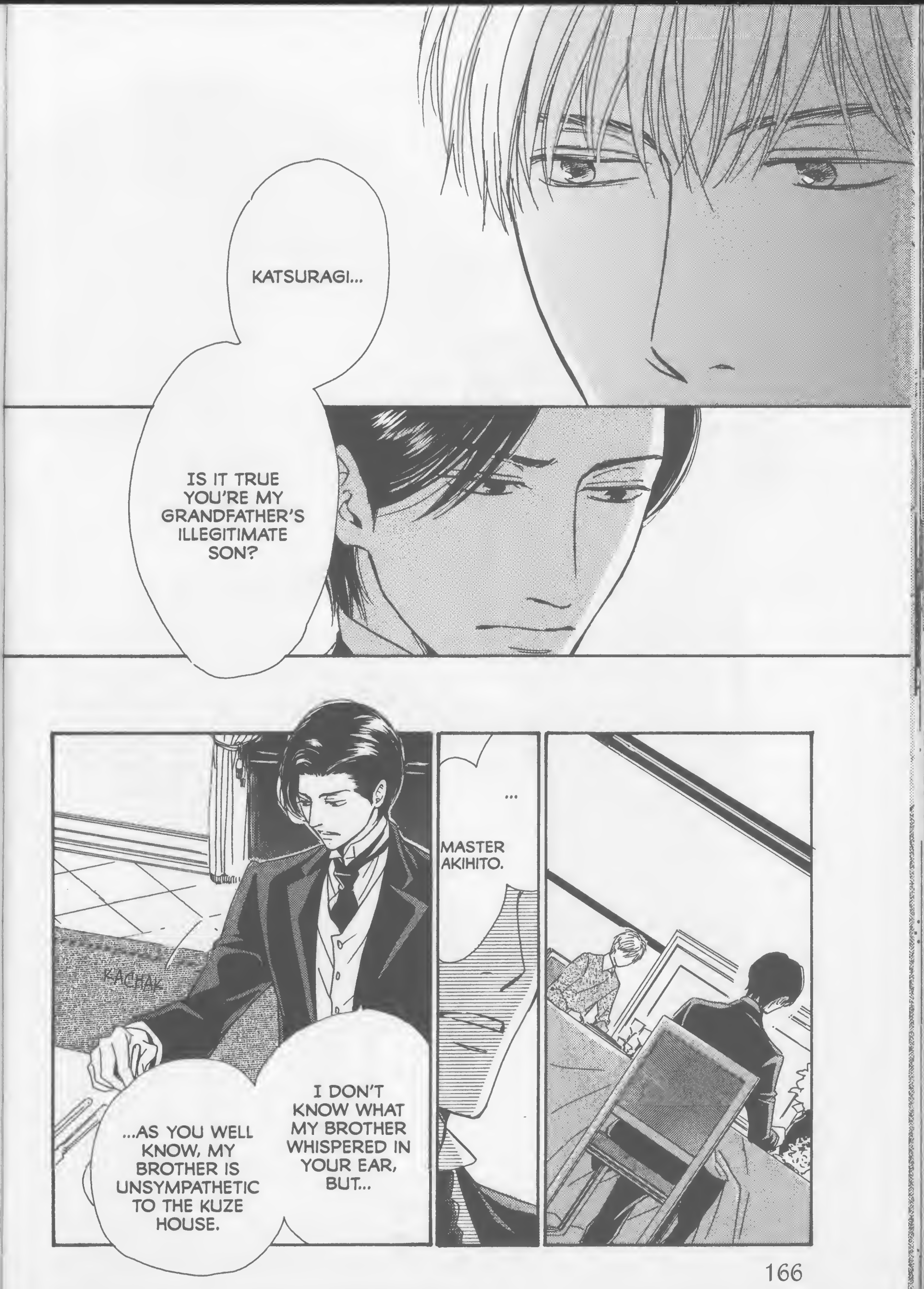

...
KIKU... RETURNED TO HER HOMETOWN.
WHAT?
THERE WAS...
...NO ONE AT THE HOUSE.
I SEE.
AND YOU, MASTER AKIHITO? HOW WAS YOUR DAY?
OH...
RIGHT.
I WAS...
...AT THE ISHIZAKIS.

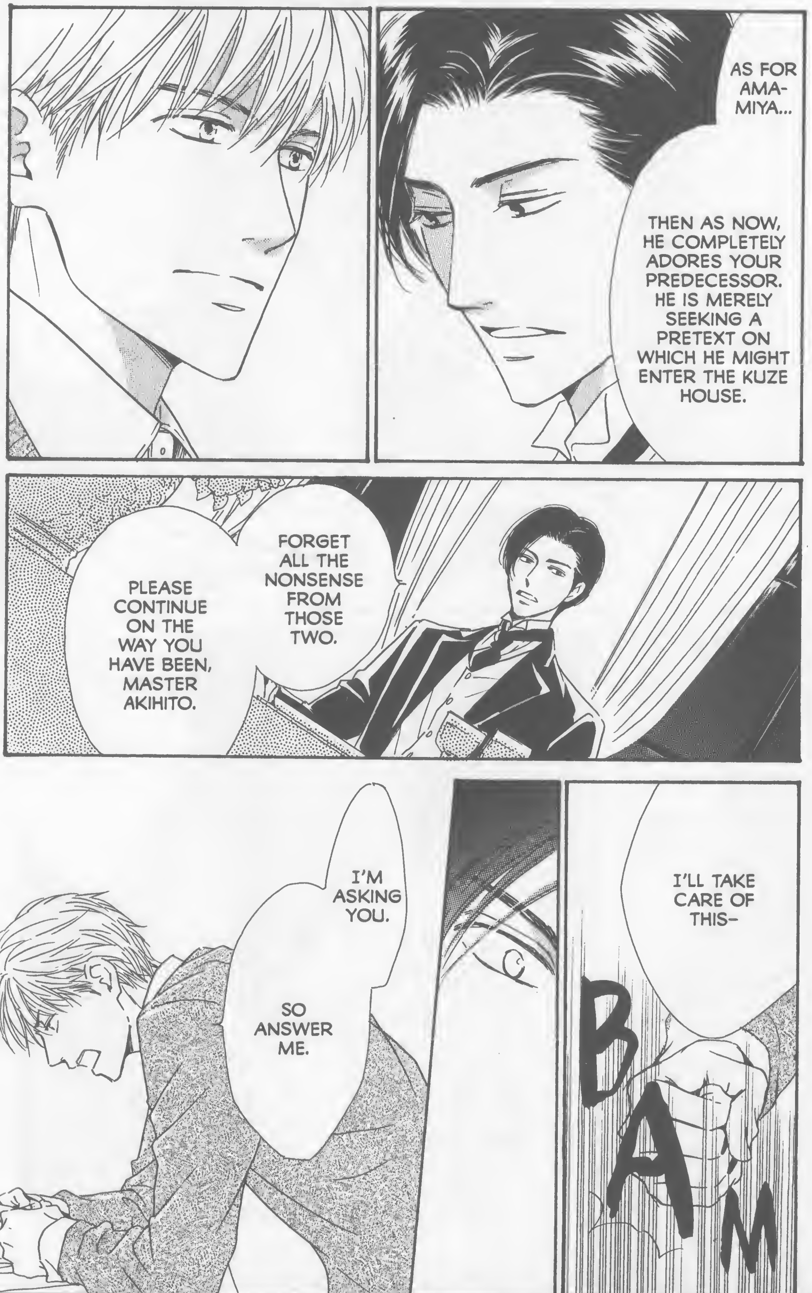

I CAN ALWAYS TELL RIGHT AWAY WHEN YOU'RE LYING, MASTER AKIHITO.
KACHAK
YOU CAN?
I CAN.
EVEN WHEN YOUR VOICE DOESN'T CHANGE, I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES.
IN THE FUTURE, FALSEHOODS WILL NO DOUBT OFTEN BE REQUIRED OF YOU.
PLEASE TAKE CARE.
...
KATSURAGI.

DO YOU STILL SEE RINZABURO AMAMIYA?
KLANK
...
I MAY NOT BE A GOOD LIAR...

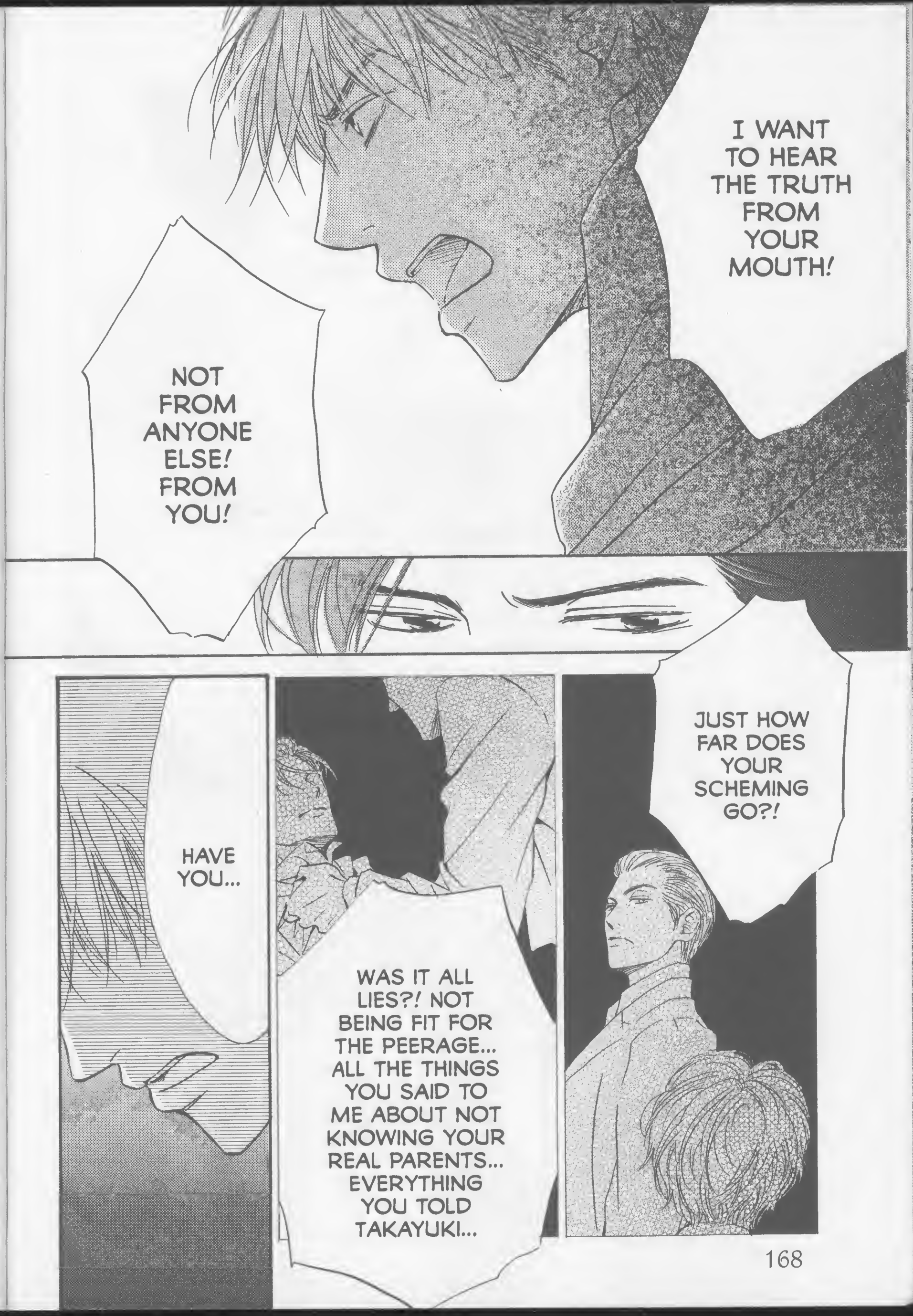

...BUT YOU, KATSURAGI ...
...ARE A TERRIBLE ONE.
scene.14 END

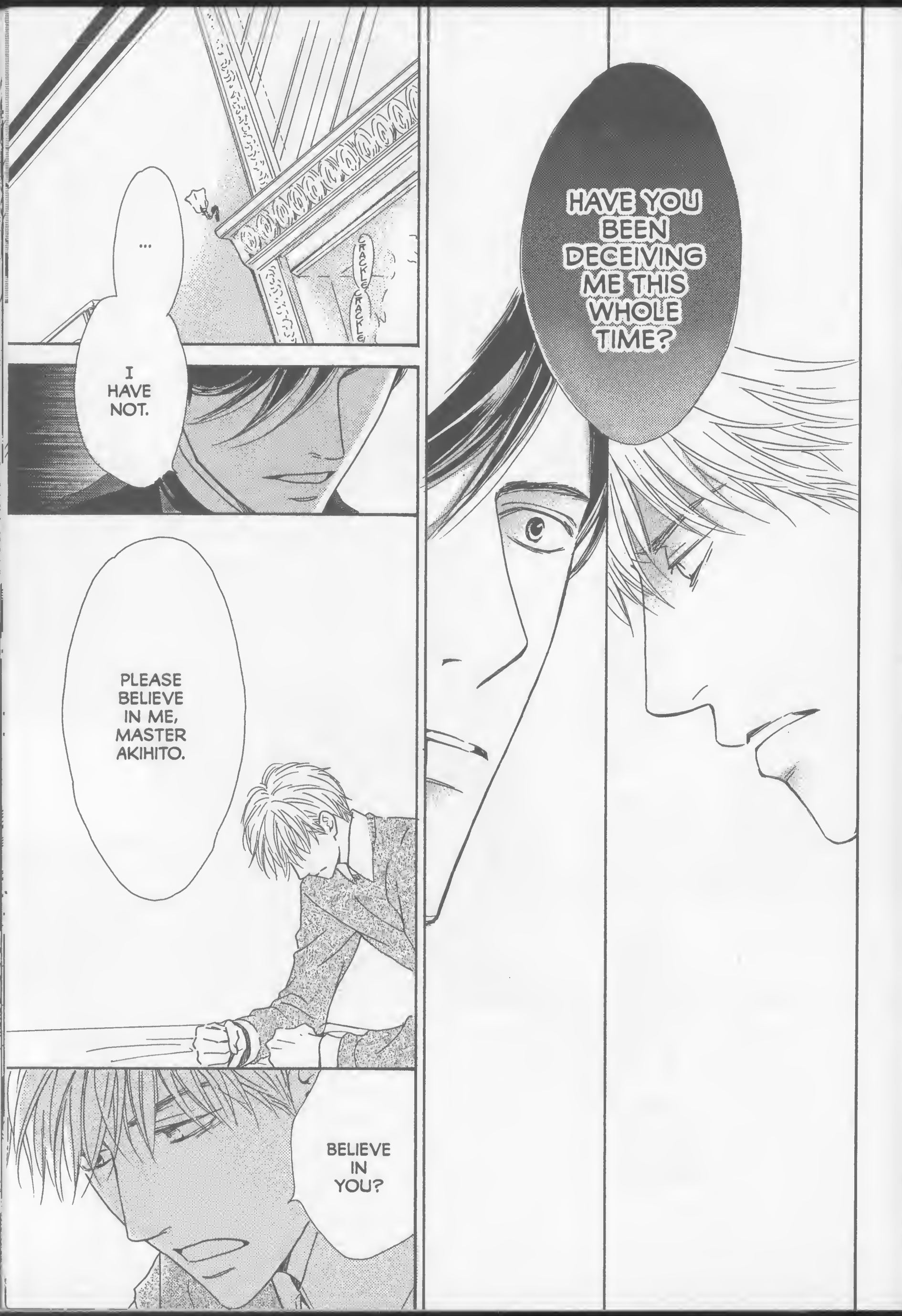
憂鬱な朝
scene.15

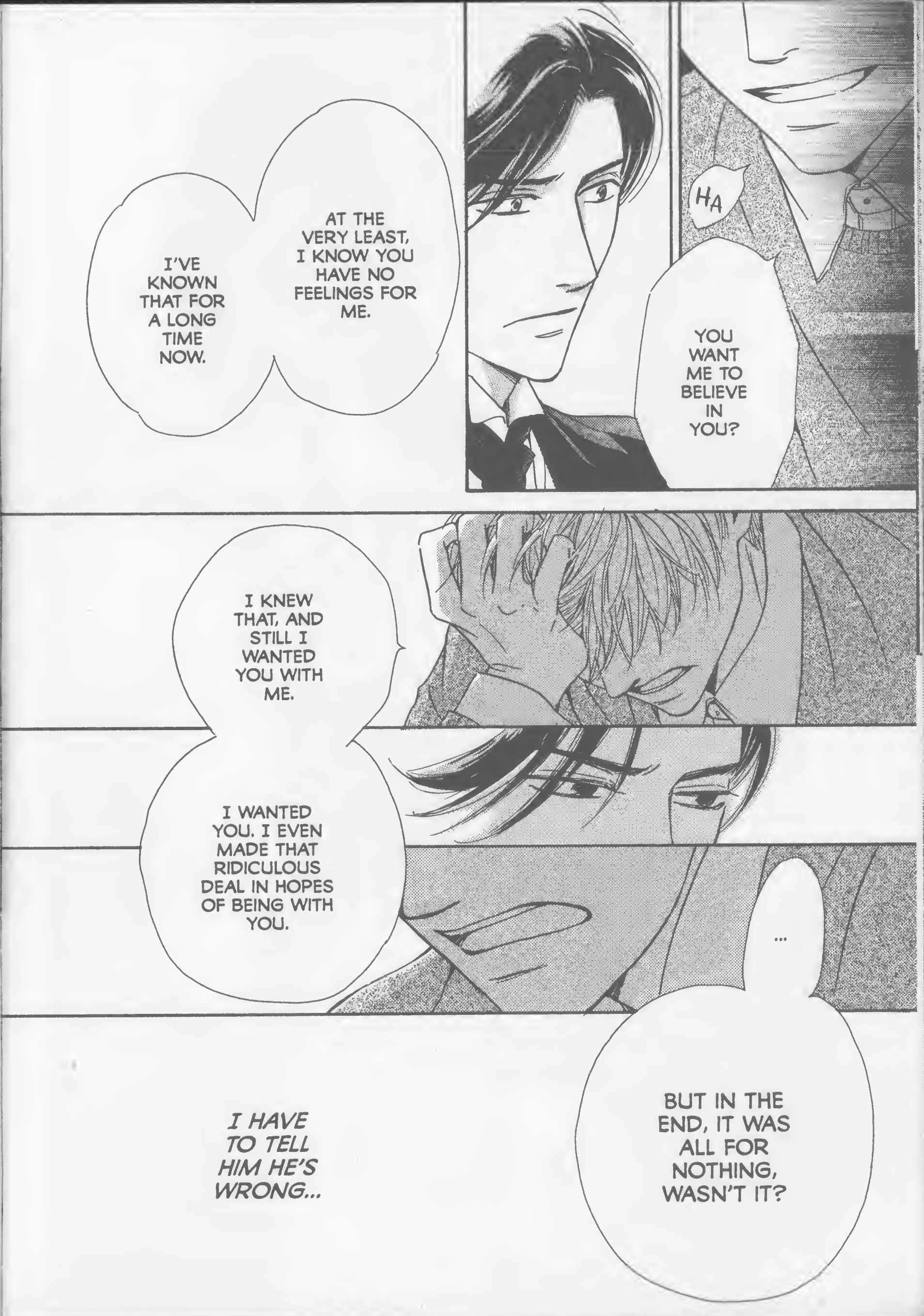
Blue Morning: Scene 15

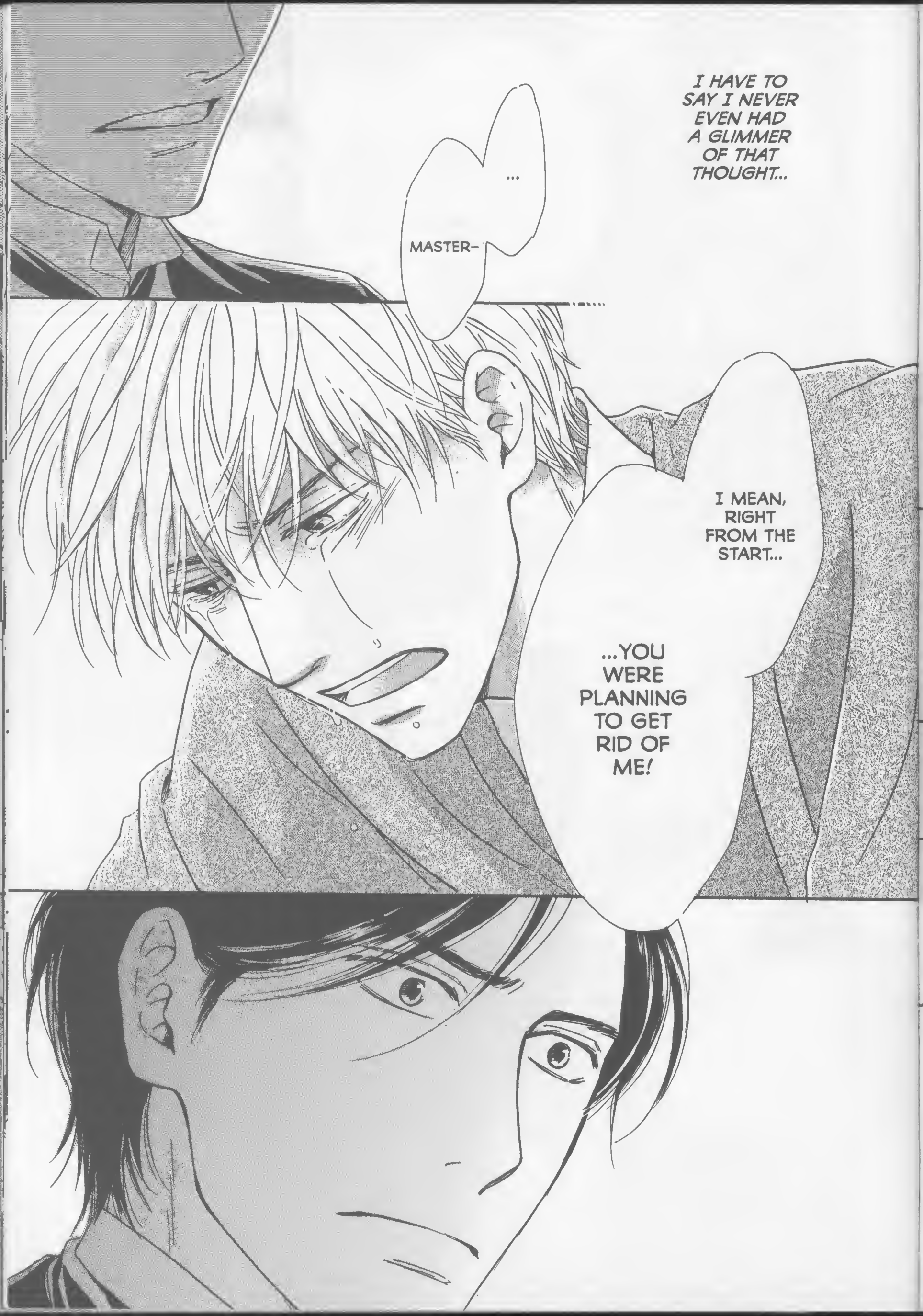

KATSURAGI...
IS IT TRUE YOU'RE MY GRANDFATHER'S ILLEGITIMATE SON?
...
MASTER AKIHITO.
KACHAK
I DON'T KNOW WHAT MY BROTHER WHISPERED IN YOUR EAR, BUT...
...AS YOU WELL KNOW, MY BROTHER IS UNSYMPATHETIC TO THE KUZE HOUSE.

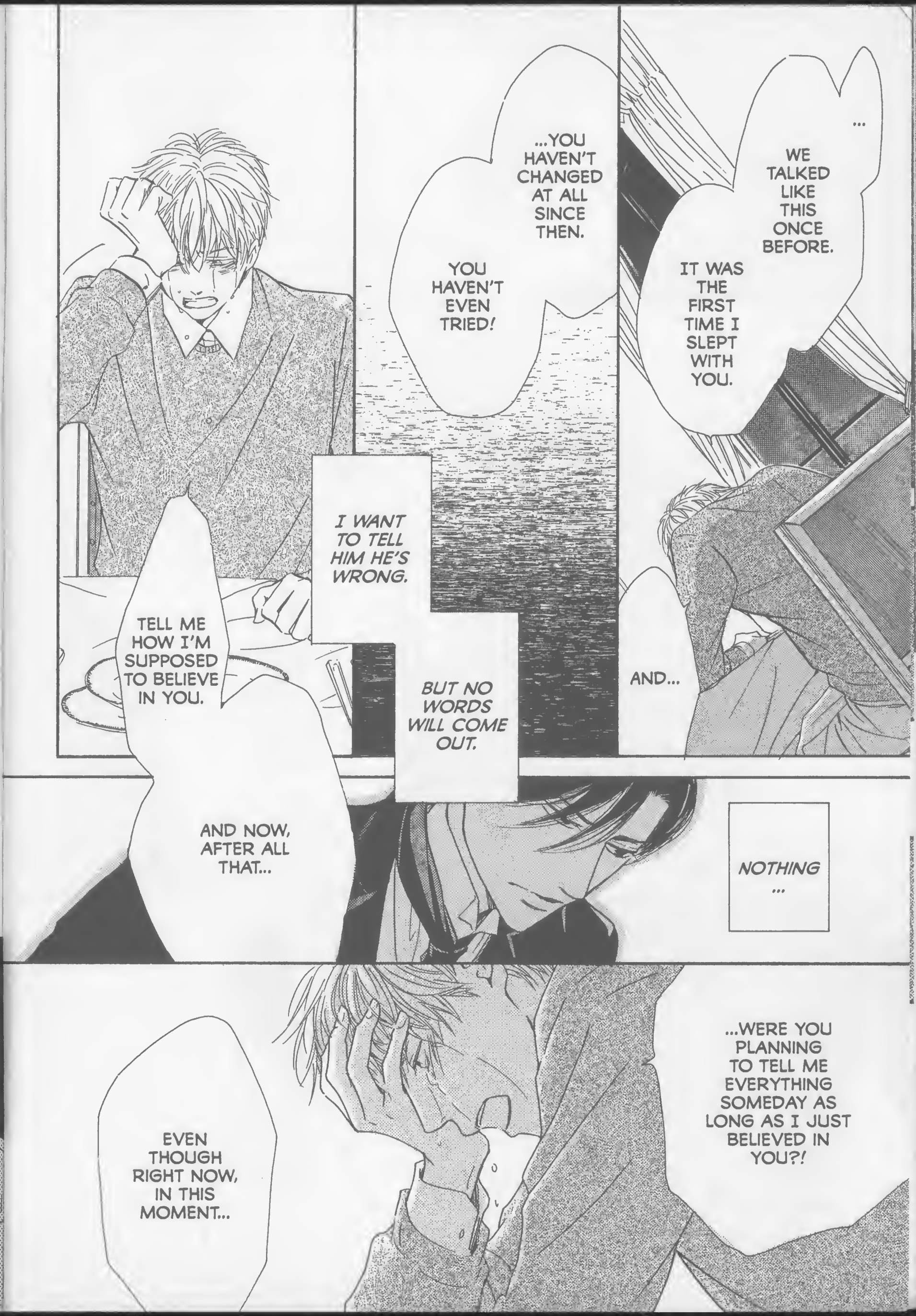

AS FOR AMAMIYA...
THEN AS NOW, HE COMPLETELY ADORES YOUR PREDECESSOR. HE IS MERELY SEEKING A PRETEXT ON WHICH HE MIGHT ENTER THE KUZE HOUSE.
FORGET ALL THE NONSENSE FROM THOSE TWO.
PLEASE CONTINUE ON THE WAY YOU HAVE BEEN, MASTER AKIHITO.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS–
BAM
I'M ASKING YOU.
SO ANSWER ME.

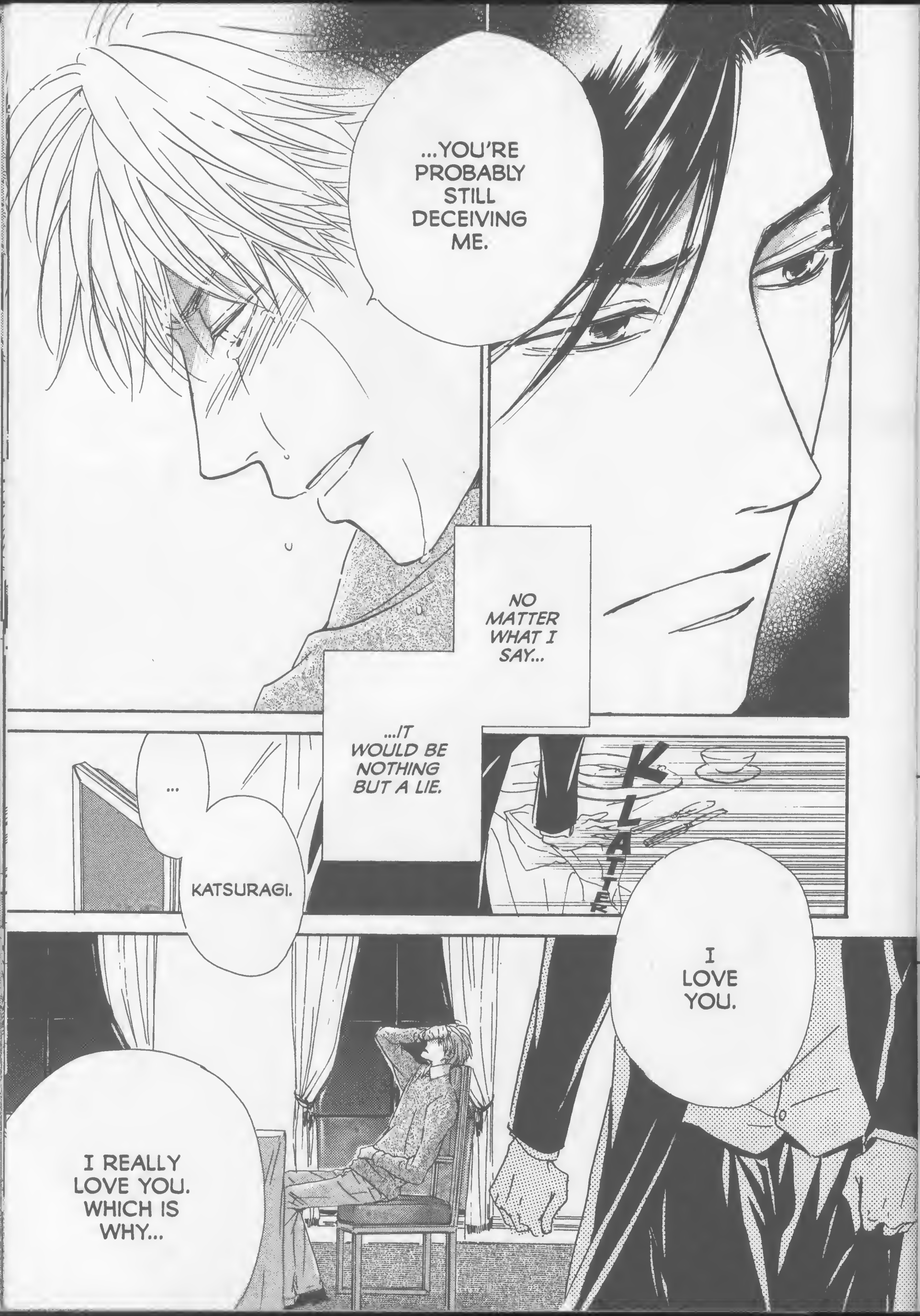

I WANT TO HEAR THE TRUTH FROM YOUR MOUTH!
NOT FROM ANYONE ELSE! FROM YOU!
JUST HOW FAR DOES YOUR SCHEMING GO?!
HAVE YOU...
WAS IT ALL LIES?! NOT BEING FIT FOR THE PEERAGE... ALL THE THINGS YOU SAID TO ME ABOUT NOT KNOWING YOUR REAL PARENTS... EVERYTHING YOU TOLD TAKAYUKI...

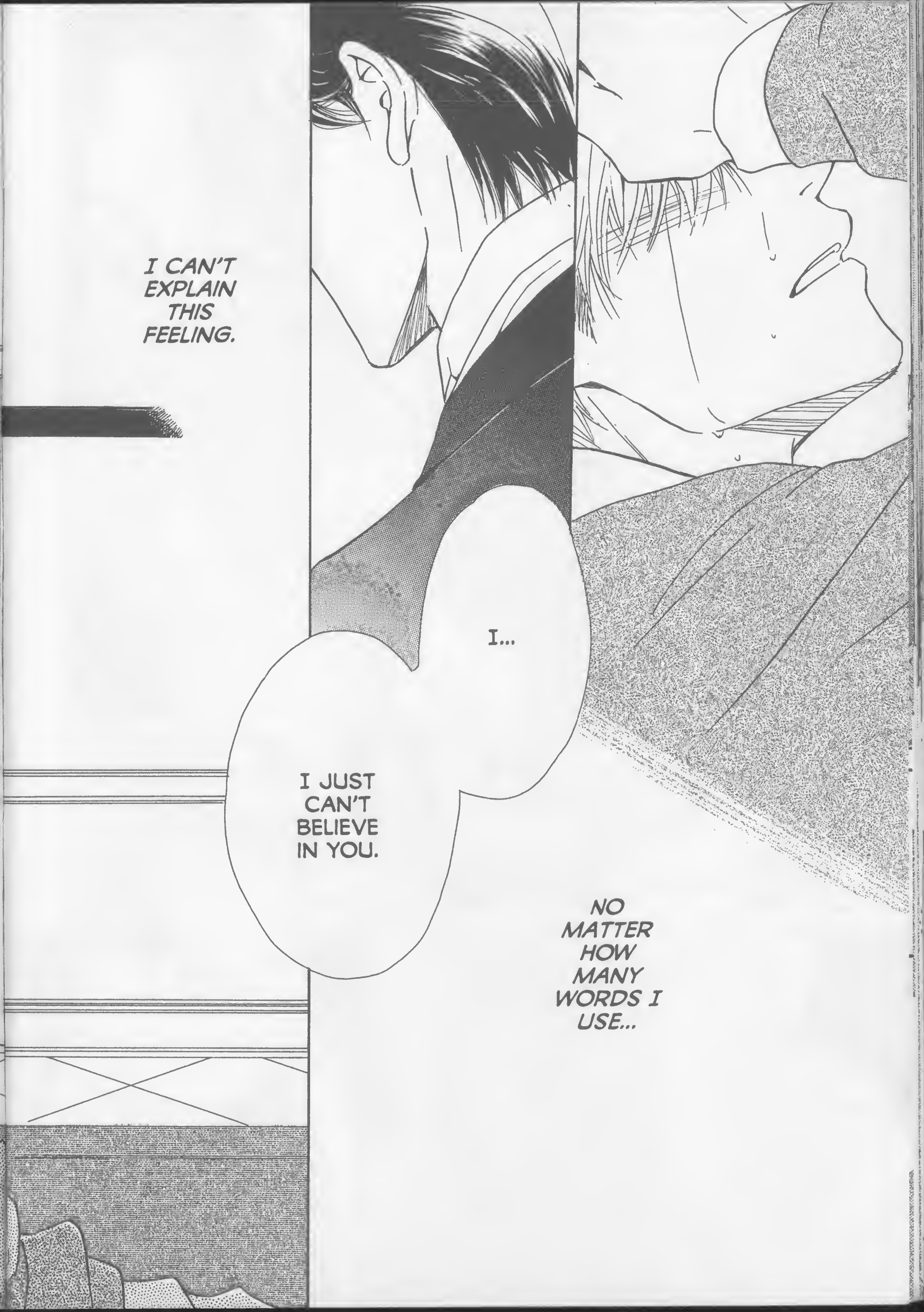

HAVE YOU BEEN DECEIVING ME THIS WHOLE TIME?
CRACKLE CRACKLE
...
I HAVE NOT.
PLEASE BELIEVE IN ME, MASTER AKIHITO.
BELIEVE IN YOU?

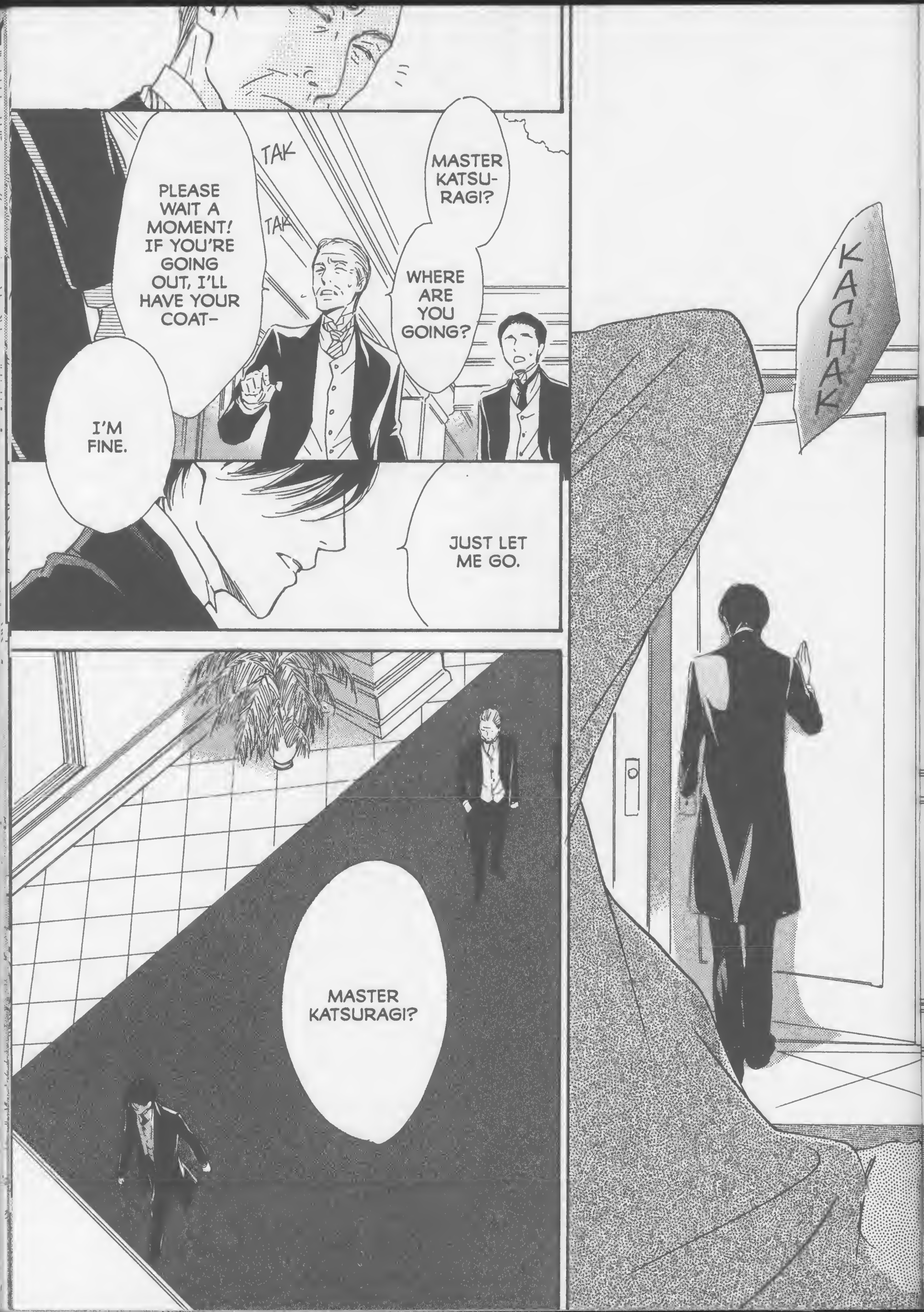

HA
YOU WANT ME TO BELIEVE IN YOU?
AT THE VERY LEAST, I KNOW YOU HAVE NO FEELINGS FOR ME.
I'VE KNOWN THAT FOR A LONG TIME NOW.
I KNEW THAT, AND STILL I WANTED YOU WITH ME.
I WANTED YOU. I EVEN MADE THAT RIDICULOUS DEAL IN HOPES OF BEING WITH YOU.
...
BUT IN THE END, IT WAS ALL FOR NOTHING, WASN'T IT?
I HAVE TO TELL HIM HE'S WRONG...

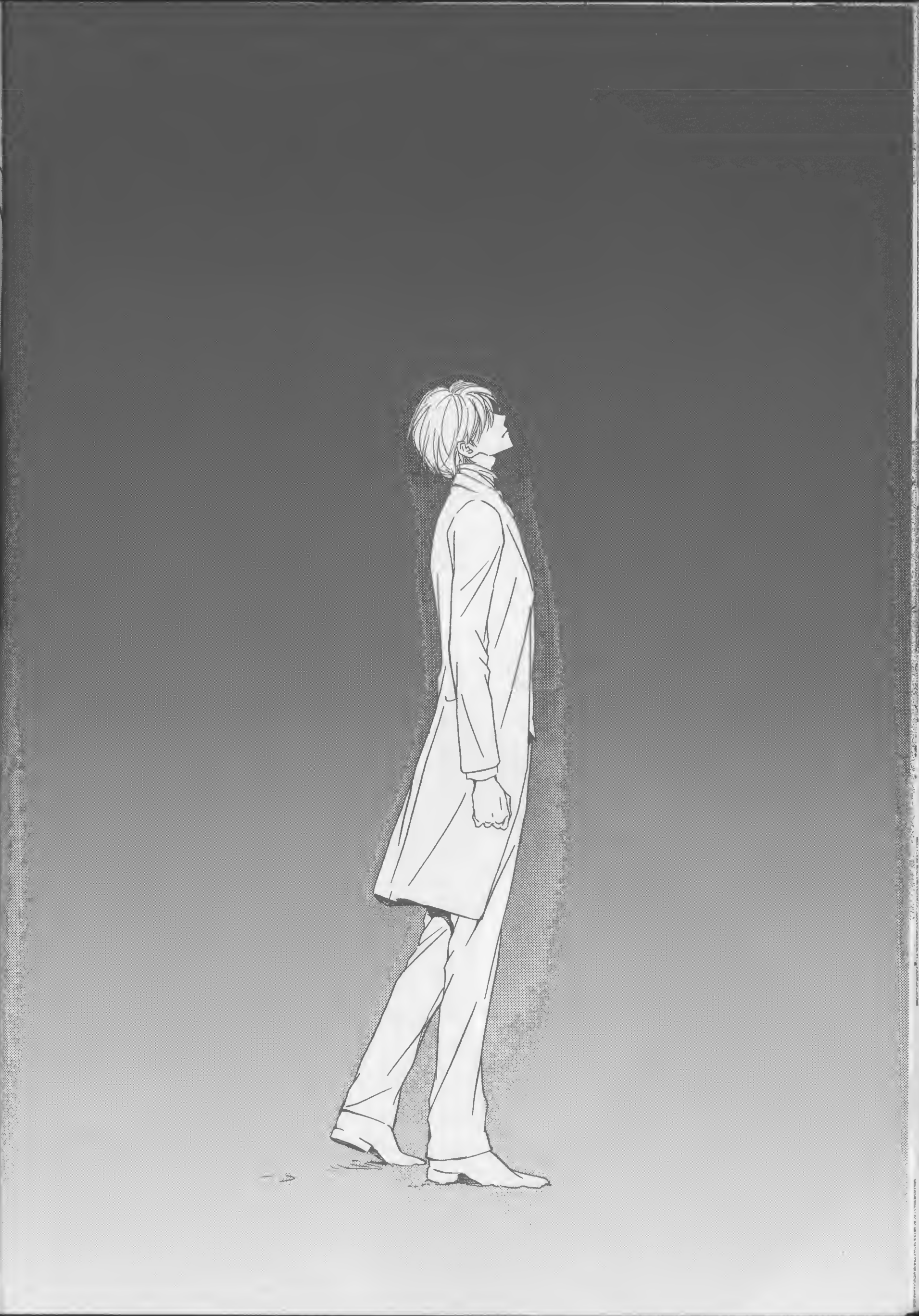

I HAVE TO SAY I NEVER EVEN HAD A GLIMMER OF THAT THOUGHT...
...
MASTER–
I MEAN, RIGHT FROM THE START...
...YOU WERE PLANNING TO GET RID OF ME!

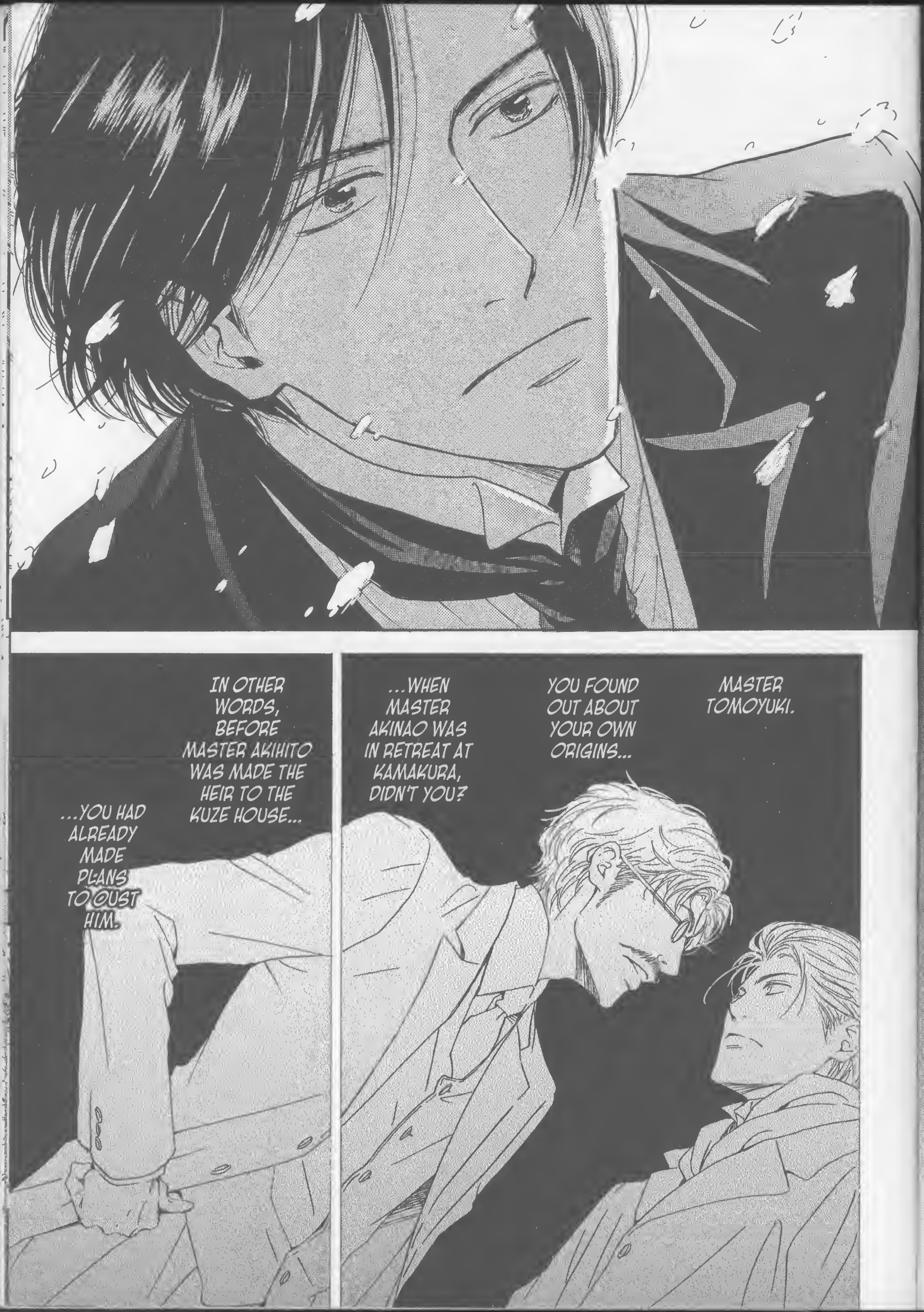

...
WE TALKED LIKE THIS ONCE BEFORE.
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I SLEPT WITH YOU.
AND...
...YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL SINCE THEN.
YOU HAVEN'T EVEN TRIED!
I WANT TO TELL HIM HE'S WRONG.
TELL ME HOW I'M SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE IN YOU.
BUT NO WORDS WILL COME OUT.
NOTHING ...
AND NOW, AFTER ALL THAT...
...WERE YOU PLANNING TO TELL ME EVERYTHING SOMEDAY AS LONG AS I JUST BELIEVED IN YOU?!
EVEN THOUGH RIGHT NOW, IN THIS MOMENT...

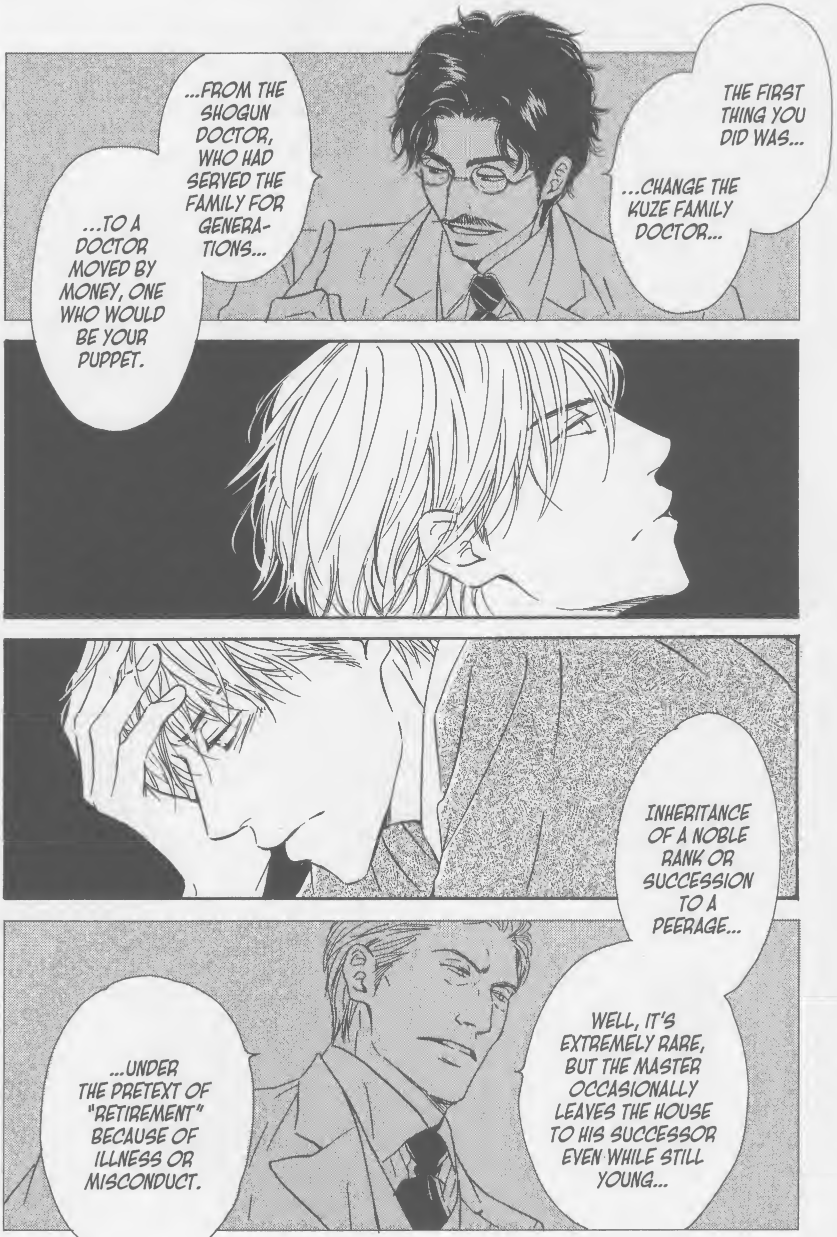

...YOU'RE PROBABLY STILL DECEIVING ME.
NO MATTER WHAT I SAY...
...IT WOULD BE NOTHING BUT A LIE.
KLATTER
...
KATSURAGI.
I LOVE YOU.
I REALLY LOVE YOU. WHICH IS WHY...

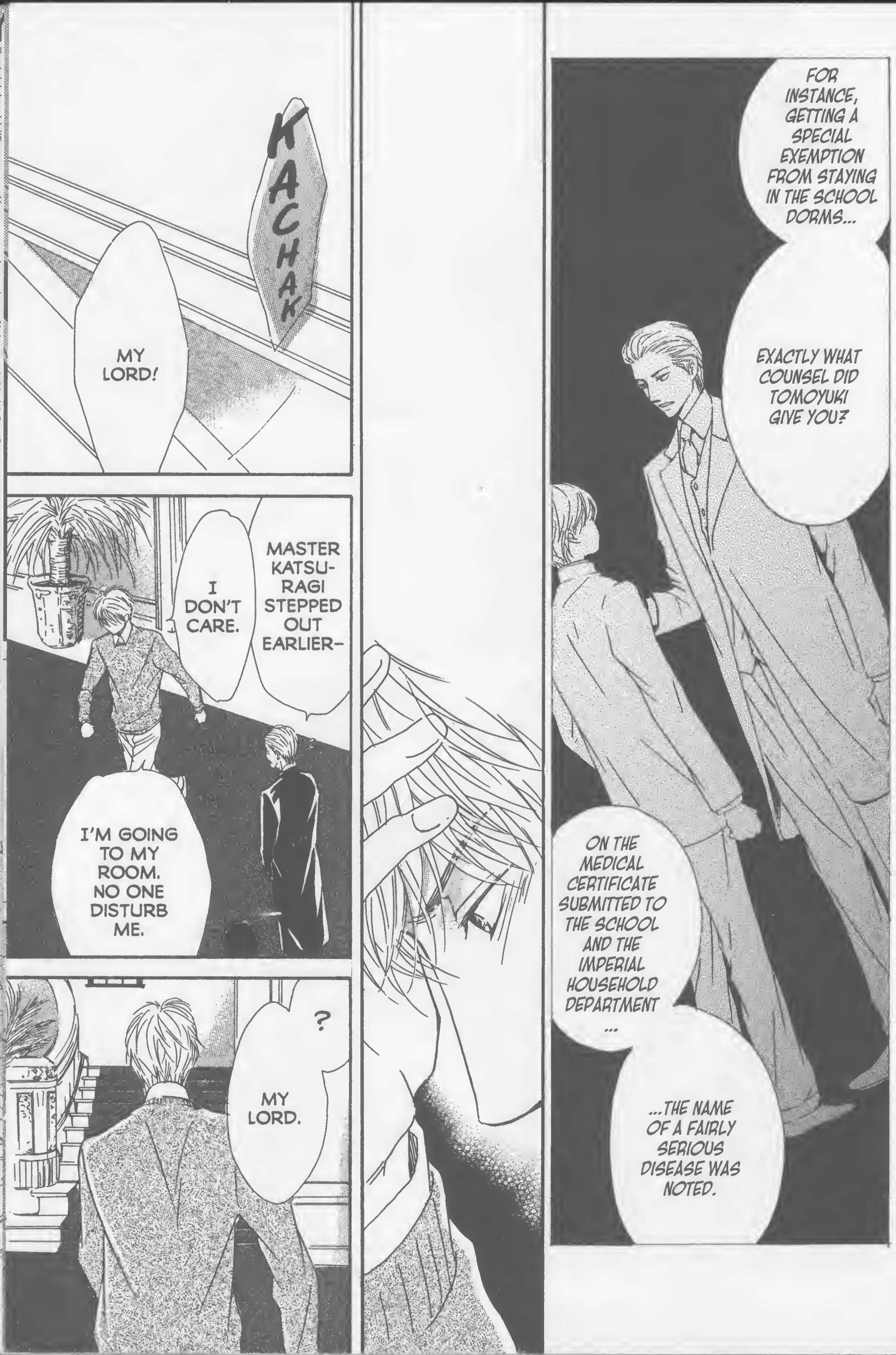

I...
I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IN YOU.
NO MATTER HOW MANY WORDS I USE...
I CAN'T EXPLAIN THIS FEELING.

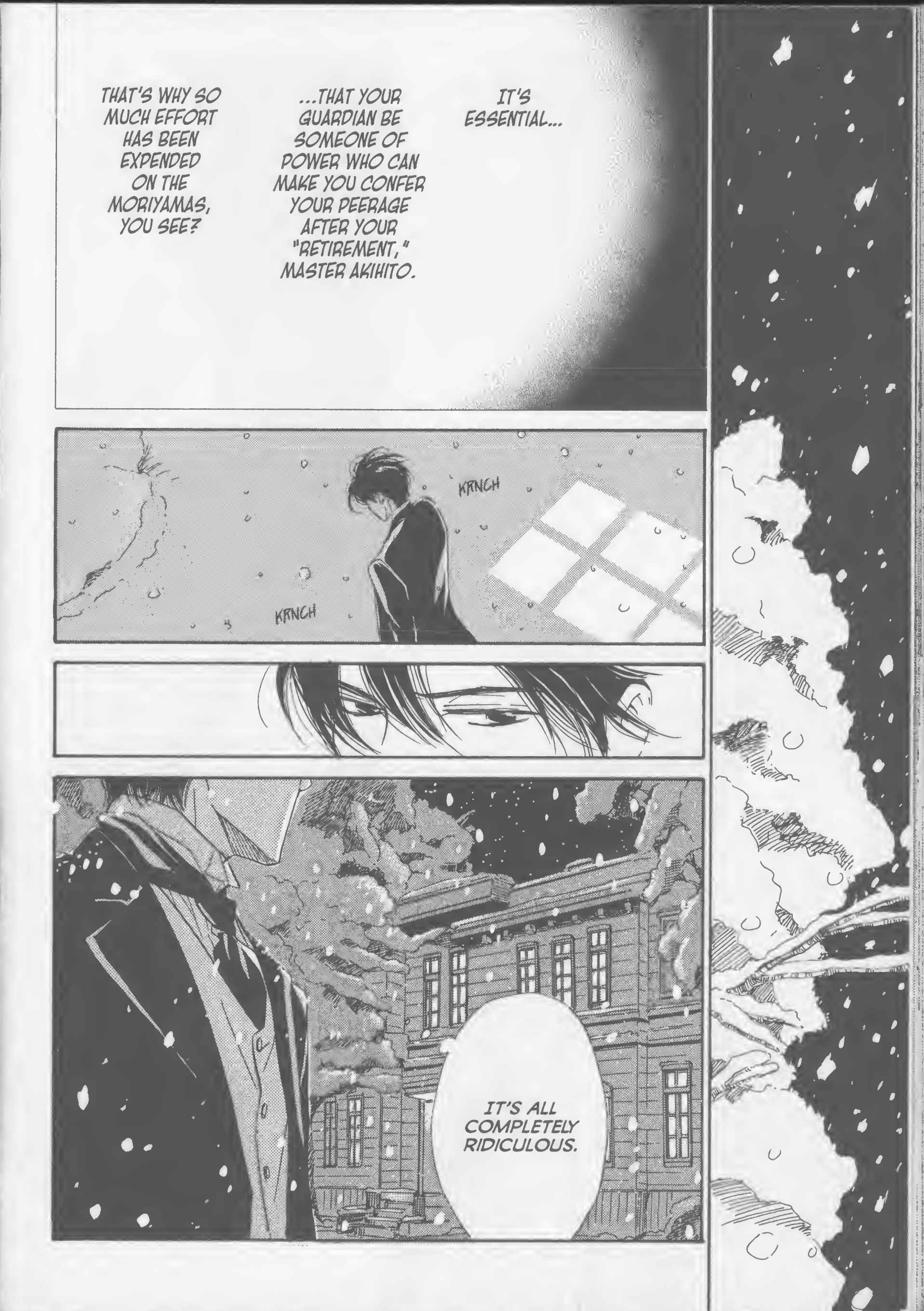

MASTER KATSURAGI?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TAK
TAK
PLEASE WAIT A MOMENT! IF YOU'RE GOING OUT, I'LL HAVE YOUR COAT-
I'M FINE.
JUST LET ME GO.
KACHAK
MASTER KATSURAGI?

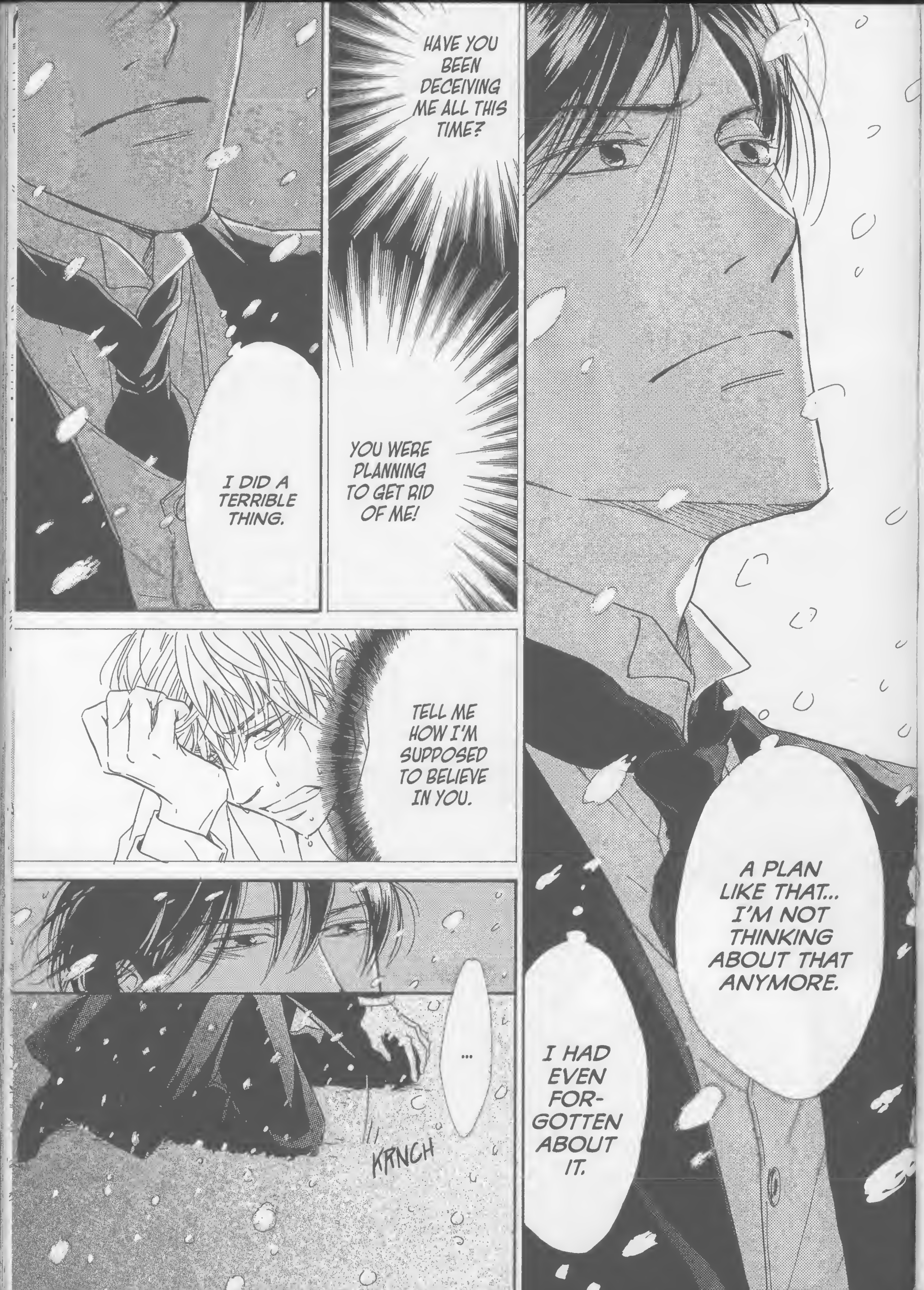


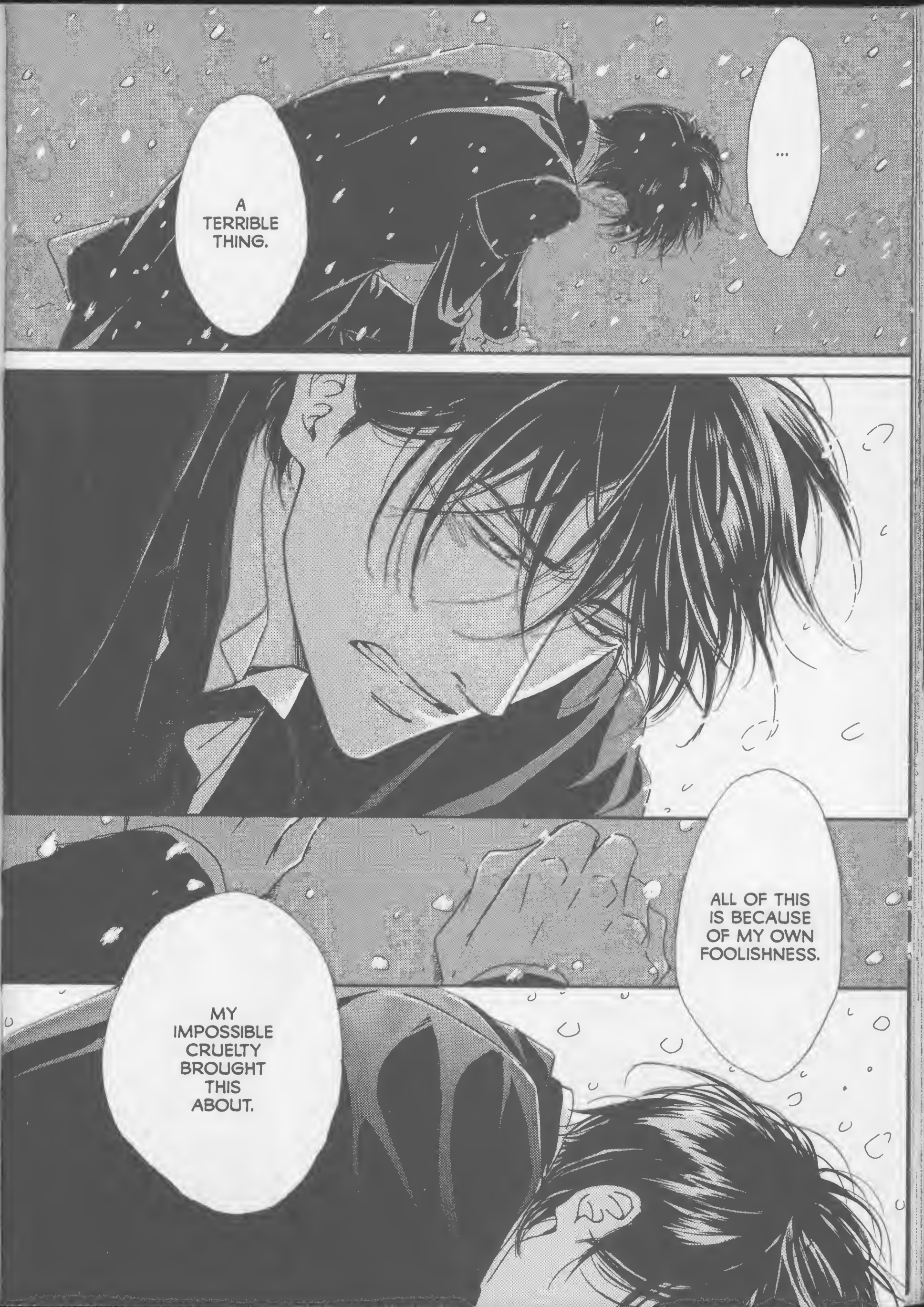

MASTER TOMOYUKI.
YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT YOUR OWN ORIGINS...
...WHEN MASTER AKINAO WAS IN RETREAT AT KAMAKURA, DIDN'T YOU?
IN OTHER WORDS, BEFORE MASTER AKIHITO WAS MADE THE HEIR TO THE KUZE HOUSE...
...YOU HAD ALREADY MADE PLANS TO OUST HIM.

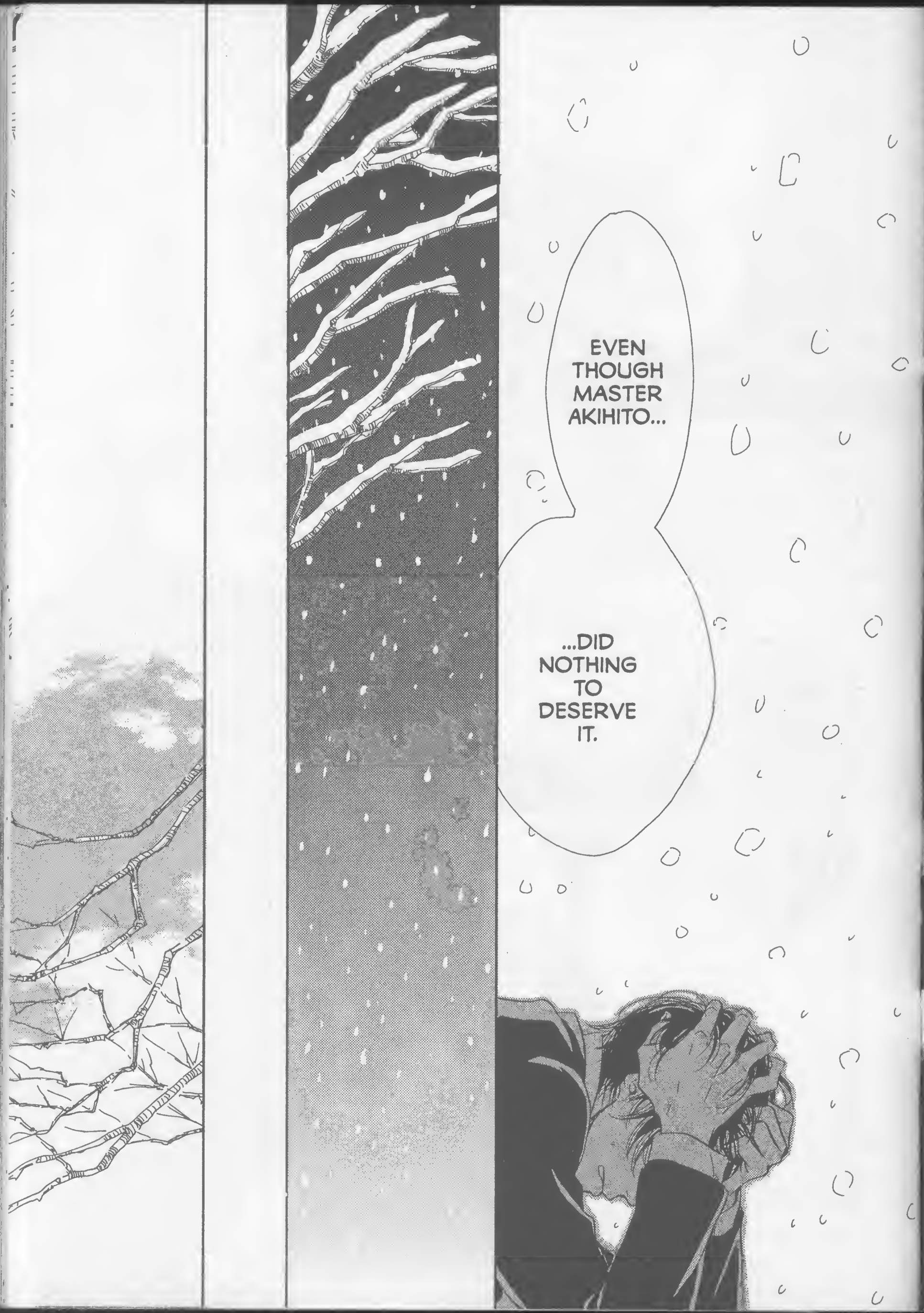

THE FIRST THING YOU DID WAS...
...CHANGE THE KUZE FAMILY DOCTOR...
...FROM THE SHOGUN DOCTOR, WHO HAD SERVED THE FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS...
...TO A DOCTOR MOVED BY MONEY, ONE WHO WOULD BE YOUR PUPPET.
INHERITANCE OF A NOBLE RANK OR SUCCESSION TO A PEERAGE...
WELL, IT'S EXTREMELY RARE, BUT THE MASTER OCCASIONALLY LEAVES THE HOUSE TO HIS SUCCESSOR EVEN WHILE STILL YOUNG...
...UNDER THE PRETEXT OF "RETIREMENT" BECAUSE OF ILLNESS OR MISCONDUCT.

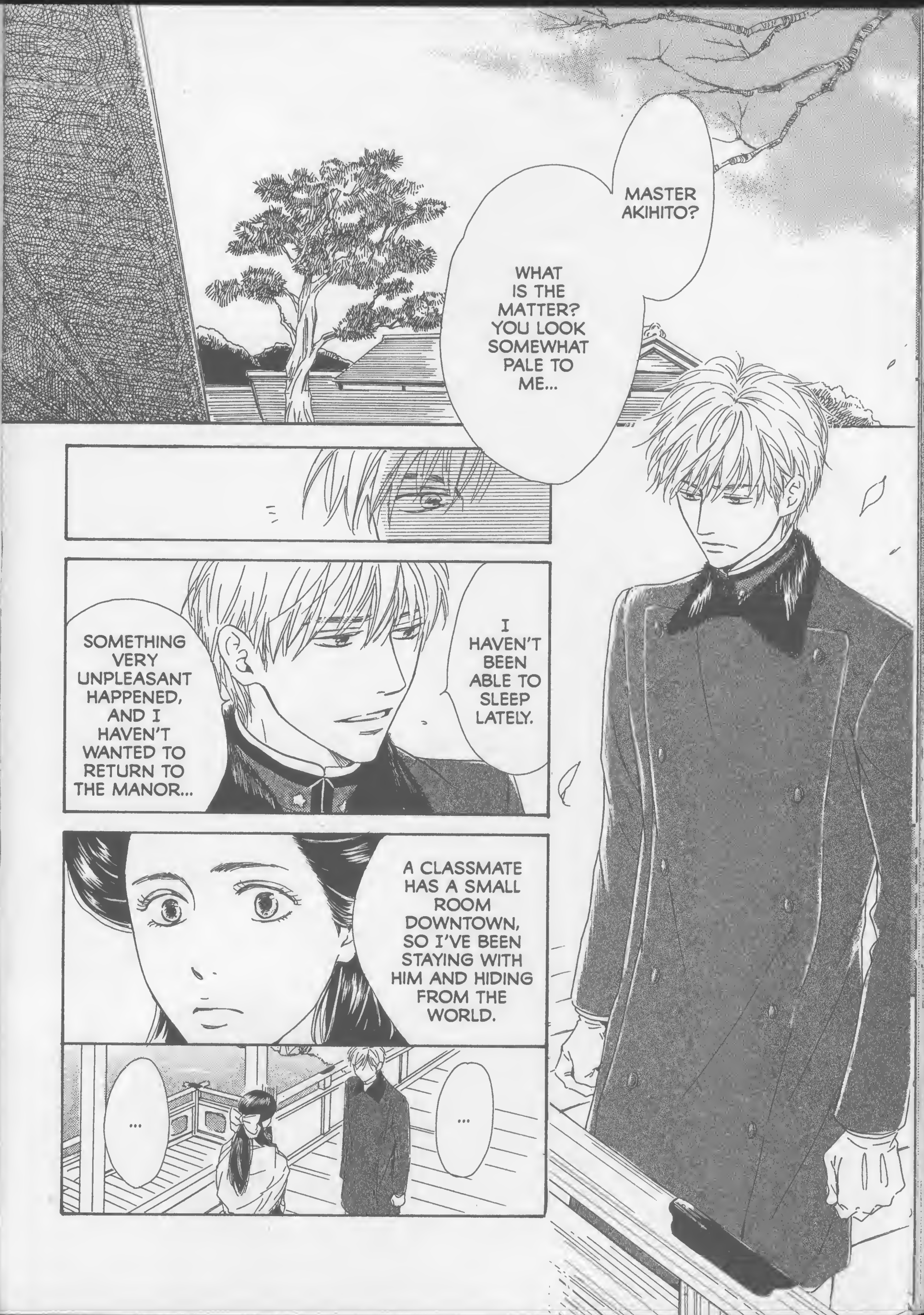

FOR INSTANCE, GETTING A SPECIAL EXEMPTION FROM STAYING IN THE SCHOOL DORMS...
EXACTLY WHAT COUNSEL DID TOMOYUKI GIVE YOU?
ON THE MEDICAL CERTIFICATE SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL AND THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD DEPARTMENT...
...THE NAME OF A FAIRLY SERIOUS DISEASE WAS NOTED.
KACHAK
MY LORD!
MASTER KATSURAGI STEPPED OUT EARLIER–
I DON'T CARE.
I'M GOING TO MY ROOM. NO ONE DISTURB ME.
?
MY LORD.

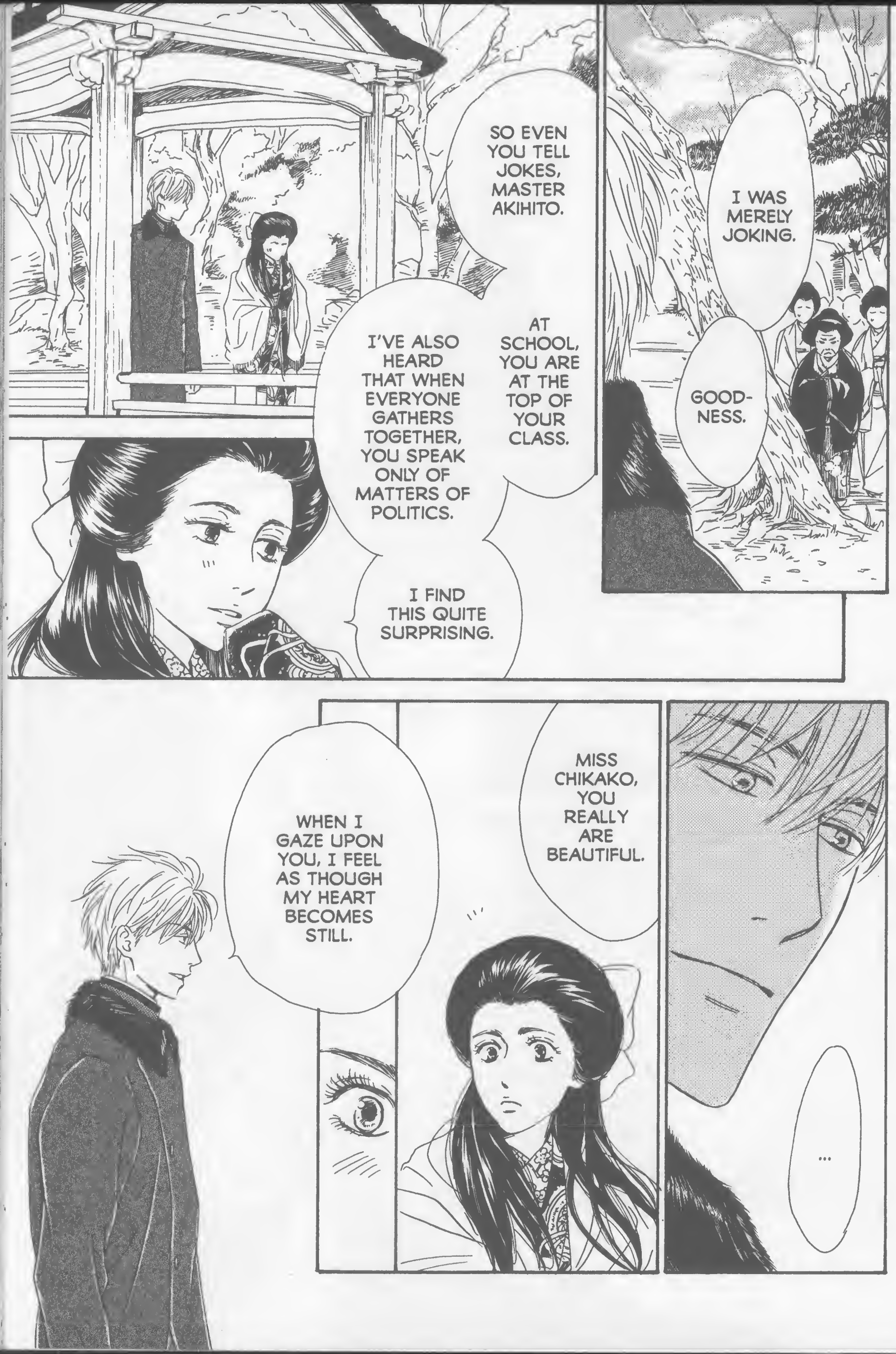

IT'S ESSENTIAL...
...THAT YOUR GUARDIAN BE SOMEONE OF POWER WHO CAN MAKE YOU CONFER YOUR PEERAGE AFTER YOUR "RETIREMENT," MASTER AKIHITO.
THAT'S WHY SO MUCH EFFORT HAS BEEN EXPENDED ON THE MORIYAMAS, YOU SEE?
KRNCH
KRNCH
IT'S ALL COMPLETELY RIDICULOUS.

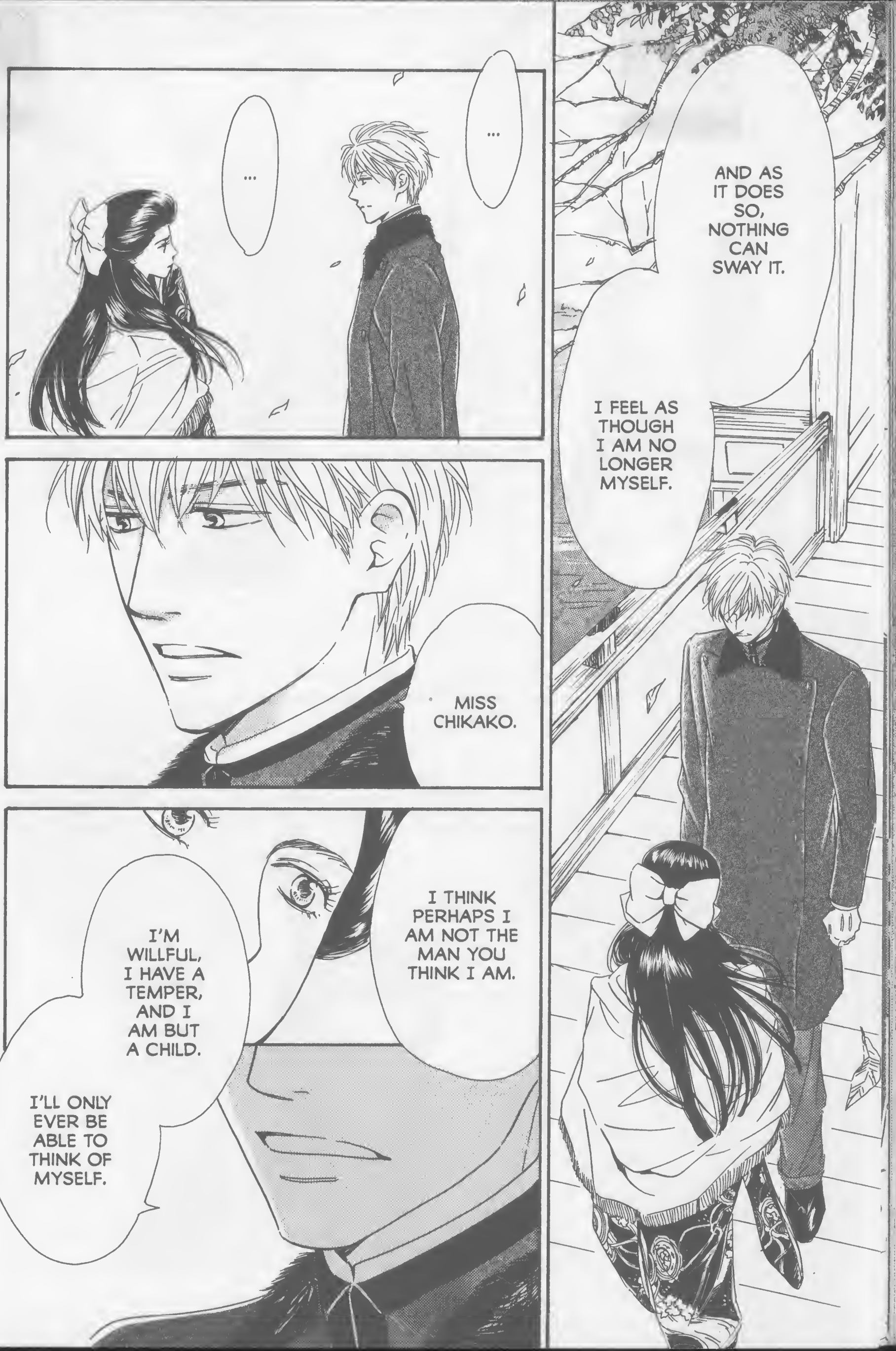

HAVE YOU BEEN DECEIVING ME ALL THIS TIME?
YOU WERE PLANNING TO GET RID OF ME!
I DID A TERRIBLE THING.
TELL ME HOW I'M SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE IN YOU.
...
KRNCH
A PLAN LIKE THAT... I'M NOT THINKING ABOUT THAT ANYMORE.
I HAD EVEN FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT.

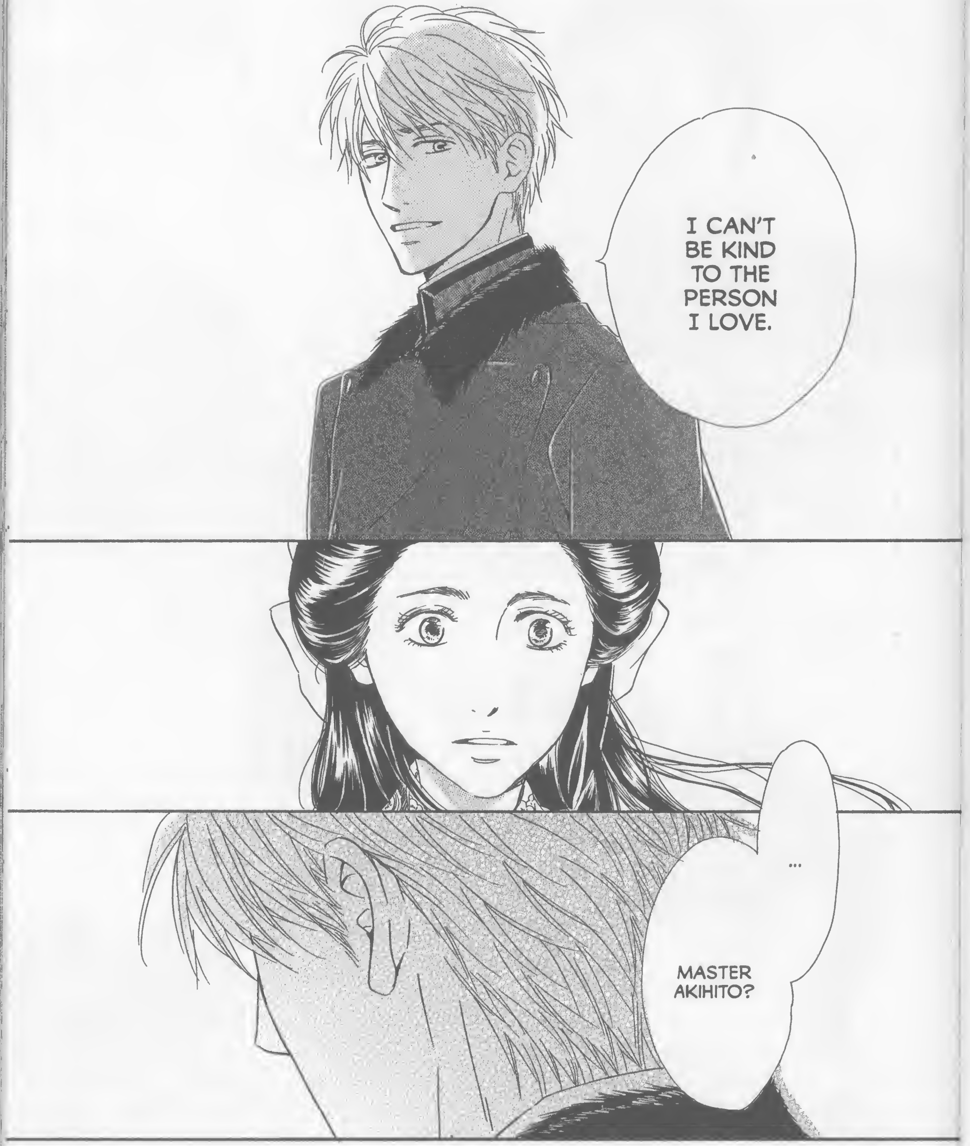

...
A TERRIBLE THING.
ALL OF THIS IS BECAUSE OF MY OWN FOOLISHNESS.
MY IMPOSSIBLE CRUELTY BROUGHT THIS ABOUT.

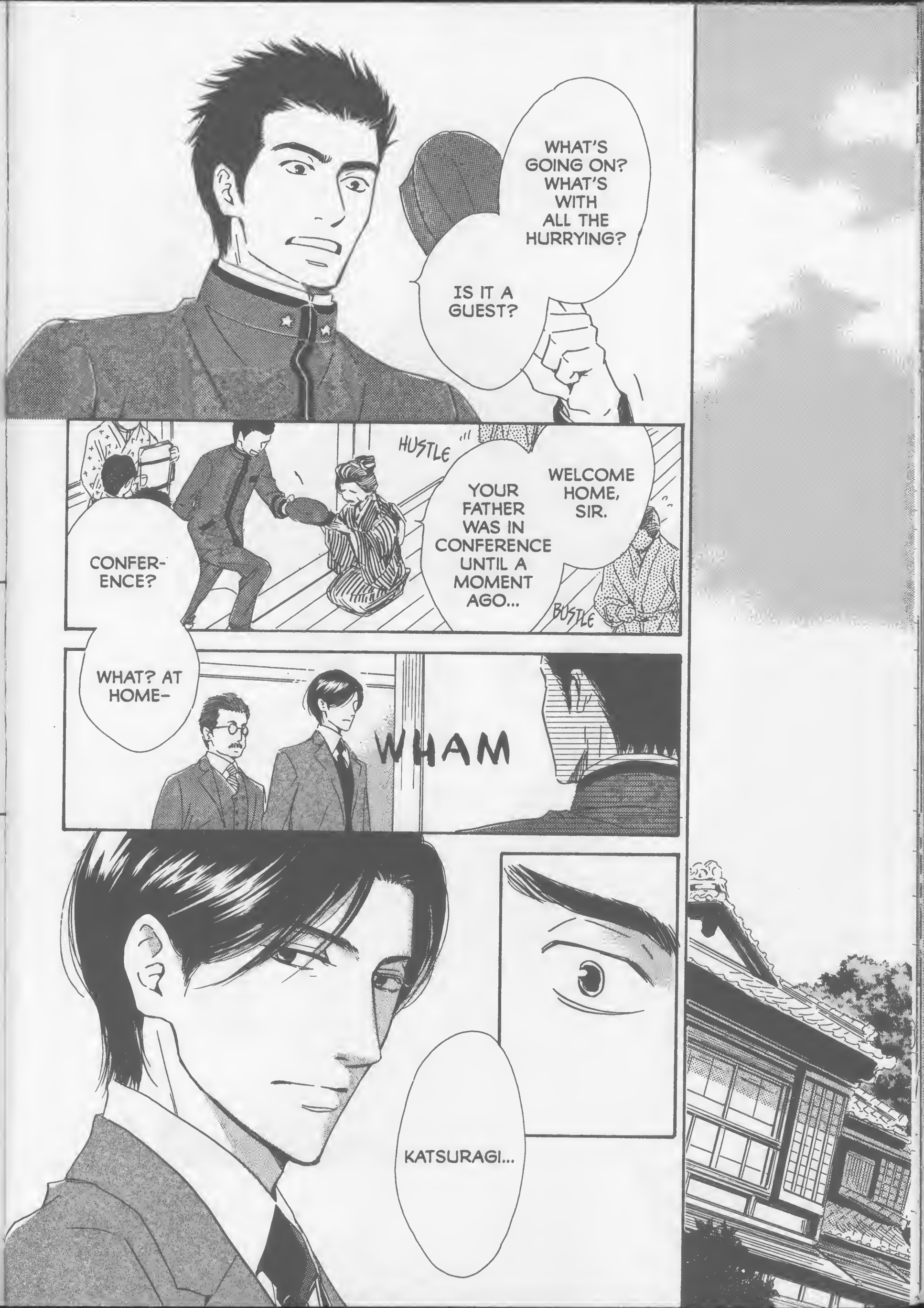

EVEN THOUGH MASTER AKIHITO...
...DID NOTHING TO DESERVE IT.

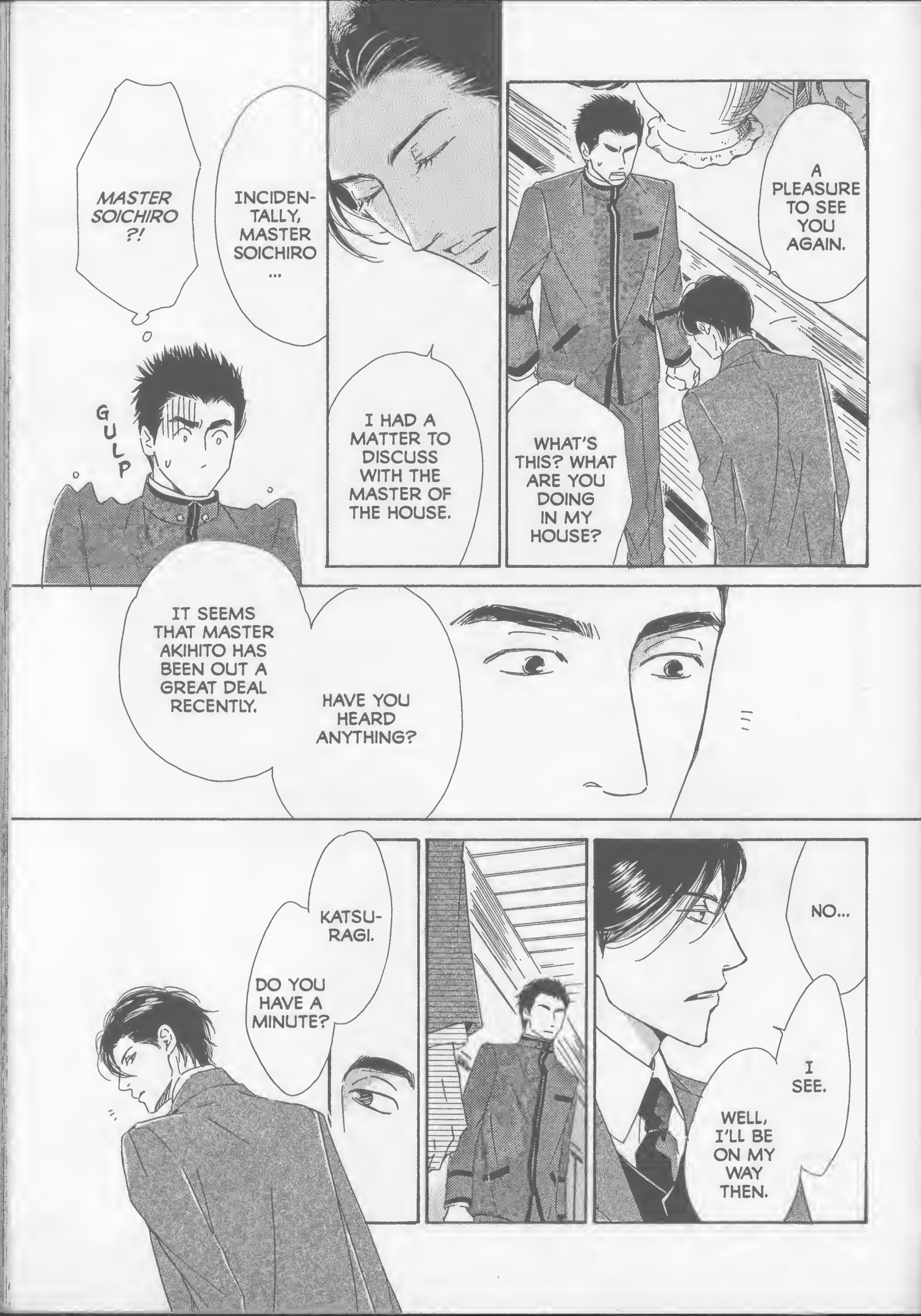

MASTER AKIHITO?
WHAT IS THE MATTER? YOU LOOK SOMEWHAT PALE TO ME...
I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SLEEP LATELY.
SOMETHING VERY UNPLEASANT HAPPENED, AND I HAVEN'T WANTED TO RETURN TO THE MANOR...
A CLASSMATE HAS A SMALL ROOM DOWNTOWN, SO I'VE BEEN STAYING WITH HIM AND HIDING FROM THE WORLD.
...
...

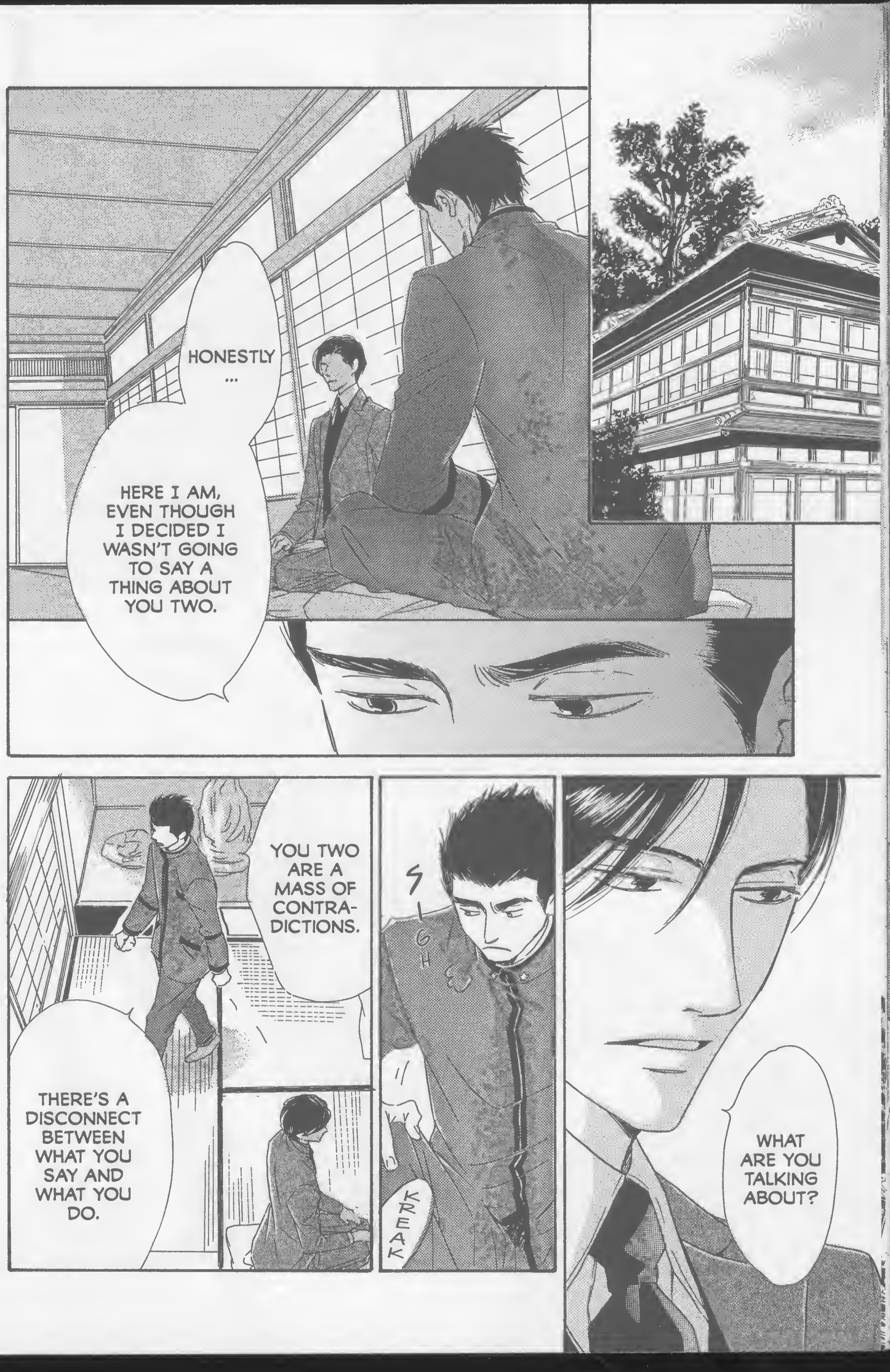

I WAS MERELY JOKING.
GOODNESS.
SO EVEN YOU TELL JOKES, MASTER AKIHITO.
AT SCHOOL, YOU ARE AT THE TOP OF YOUR CLASS.
I'VE ALSO HEARD THAT WHEN EVERYONE GATHERS TOGETHER, YOU SPEAK ONLY OF MATTERS OF POLITICS.
I FIND THIS QUITE SURPRISING.
MISS CHIKAKO, YOU REALLY ARE BEAUTIFUL.
WHEN I GAZE UPON YOU, I FEEL AS THOUGH MY HEART BECOMES STILL.
...

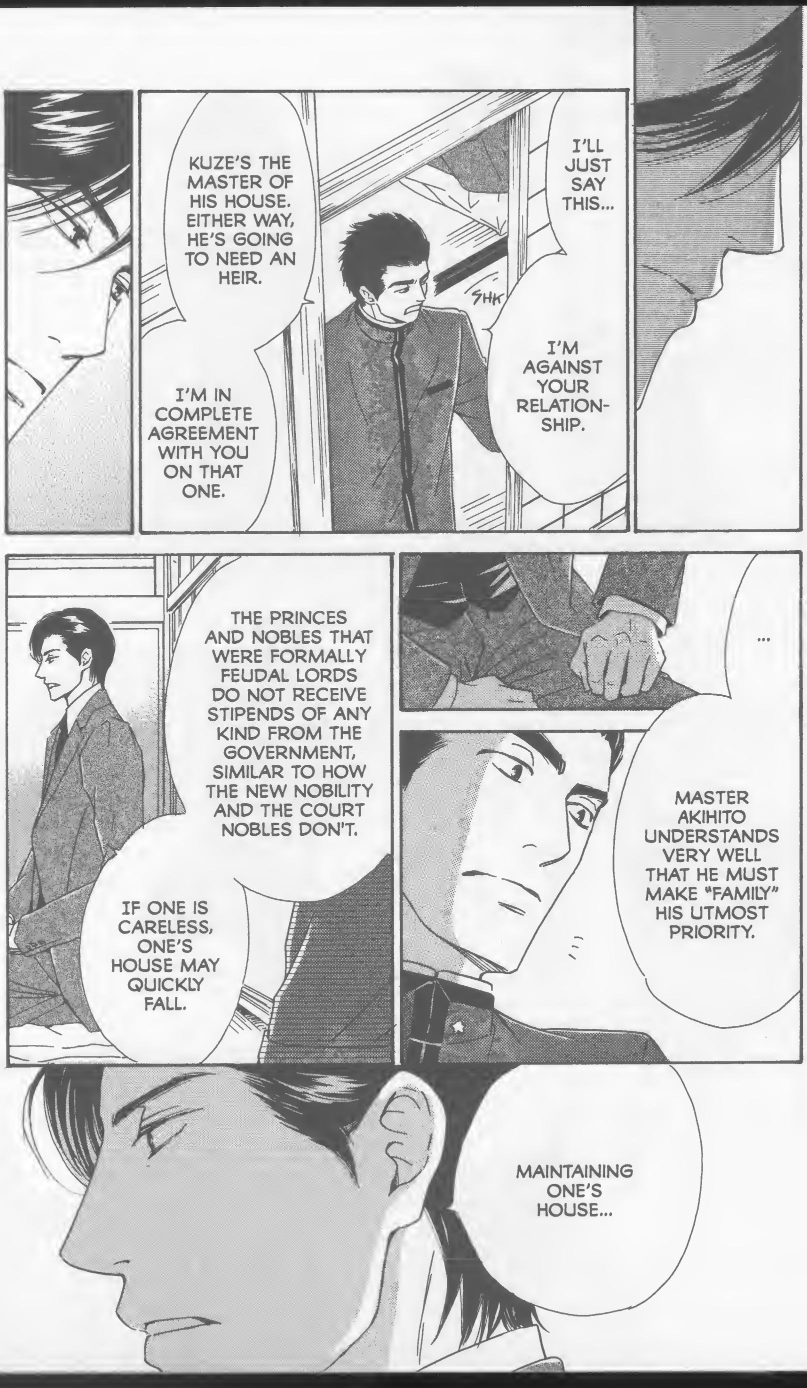

AND AS IT DOES SO, NOTHING CAN SWAY IT.
I FEEL AS THOUGH I AM NO LONGER MYSELF.
...
...
MISS CHIKAKO.
I THINK PERHAPS I AM NOT THE MAN YOU THINK I AM.
I'M WILLFUL, I HAVE A TEMPER, AND I AM BUT A CHILD.
I'LL ONLY EVER BE ABLE TO THINK OF MYSELF.

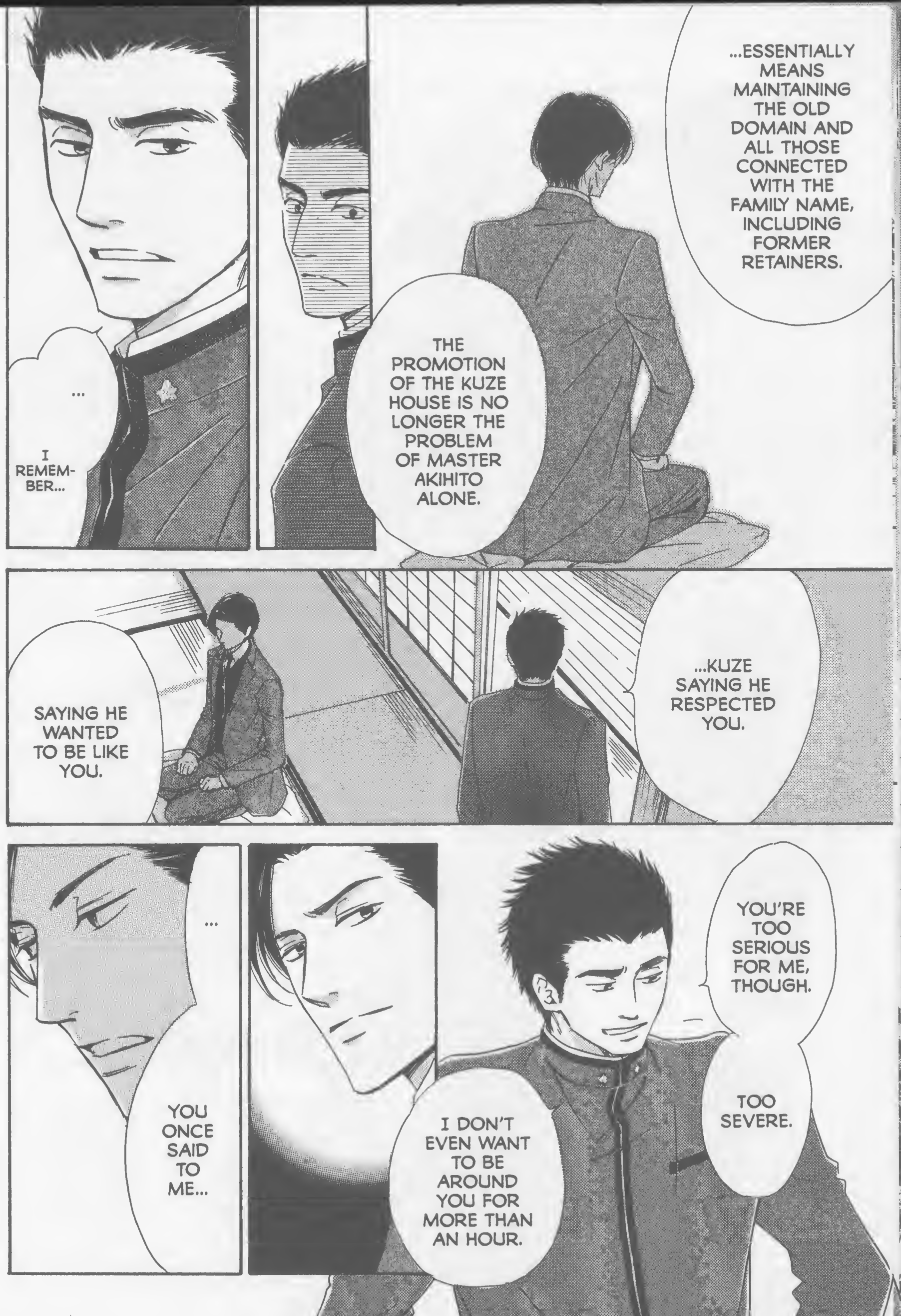

I CAN'T BE KIND TO THE PERSON I LOVE.
...
MASTER AKIHITO?

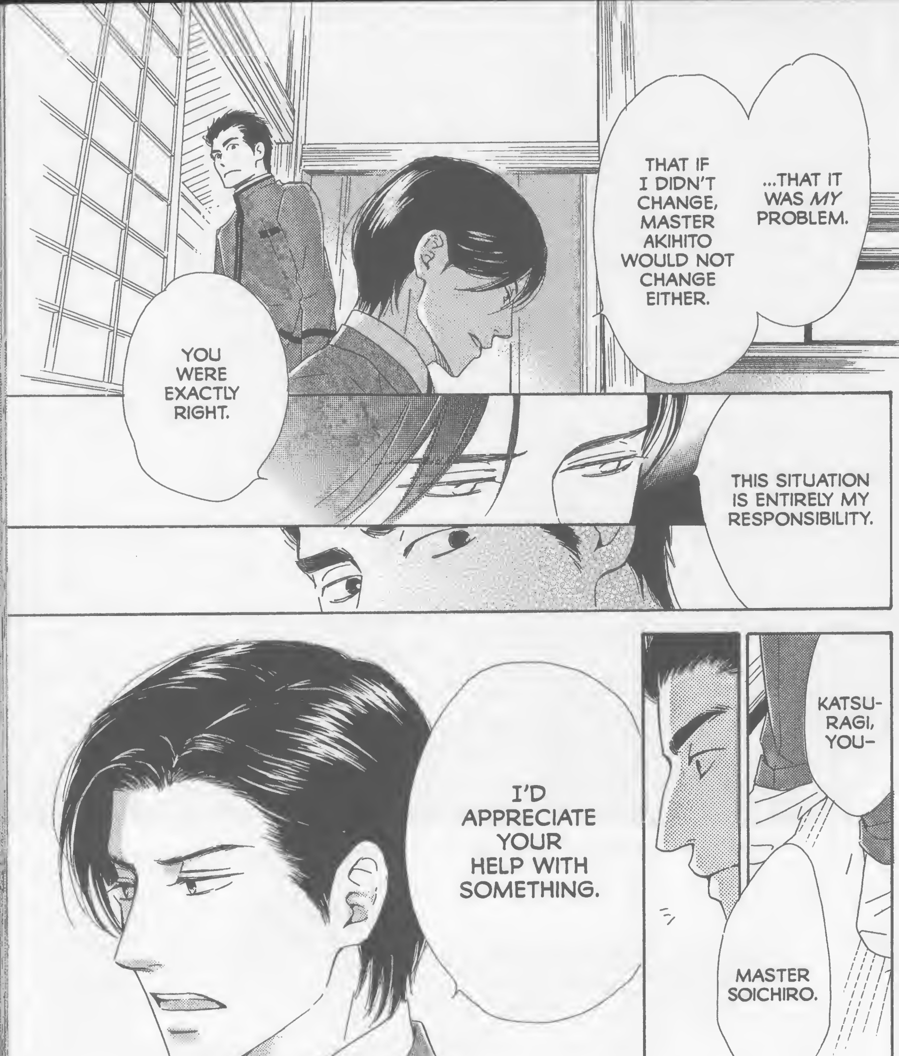

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT'S WITH ALL THE HURRYING?
IS IT A GUEST?
WELCOME HOME, SIR.
YOUR FATHER WAS IN CONFERENCE UNTIL A MOMENT AGO...
HUSTLE
BUSTLE
CONFERENCE?
WHAT? AT HOME-
WHAM
KATSURAGI...

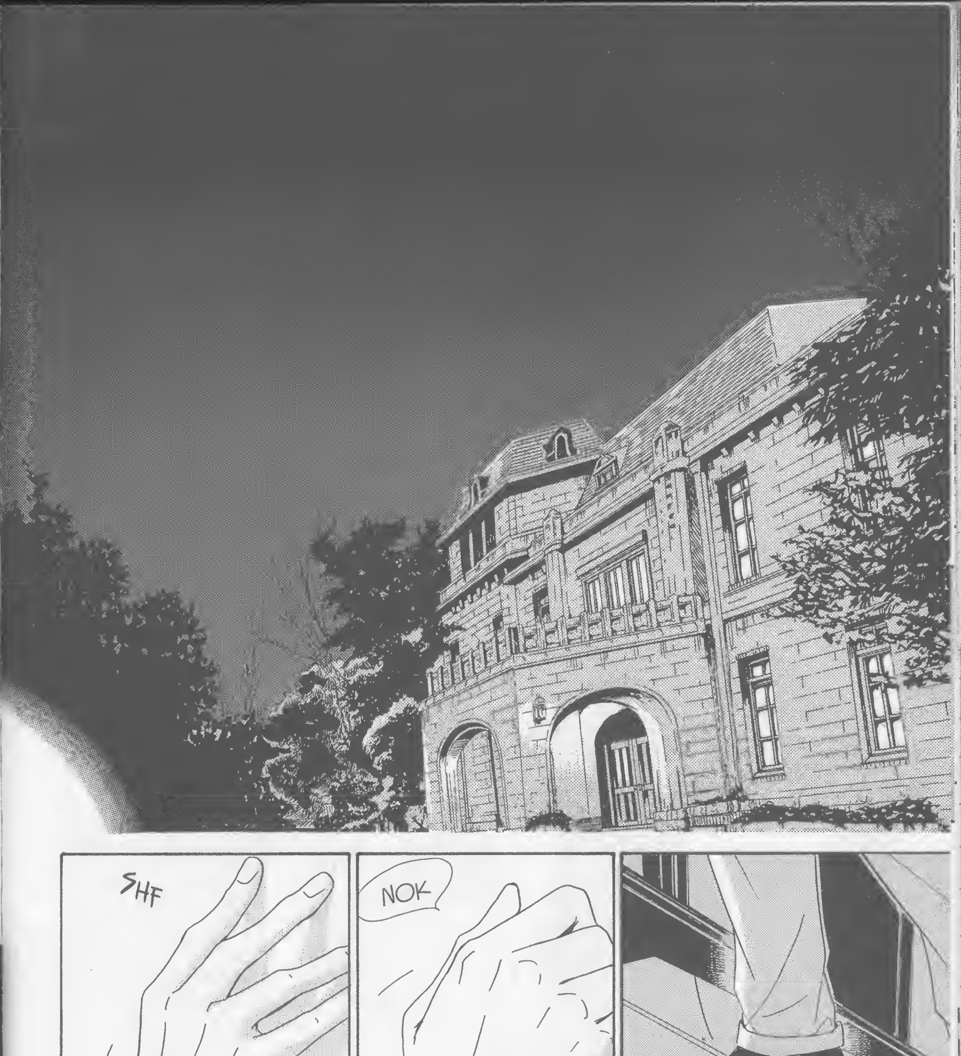

A PLEASURE TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
WHAT'S THIS? WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY HOUSE?
INCIDENTALLY, MASTER SOICHIRO...
I HAD A MATTER TO DISCUSS WITH THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
MASTER SOICHIRO?!
GULP
IT SEEMS THAT MASTER AKIHITO HAS BEEN OUT A GREAT DEAL RECENTLY.
HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING?
NO...
I SEE.
WELL, I'LL BE ON MY WAY THEN.
KATSURAGI.
DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?

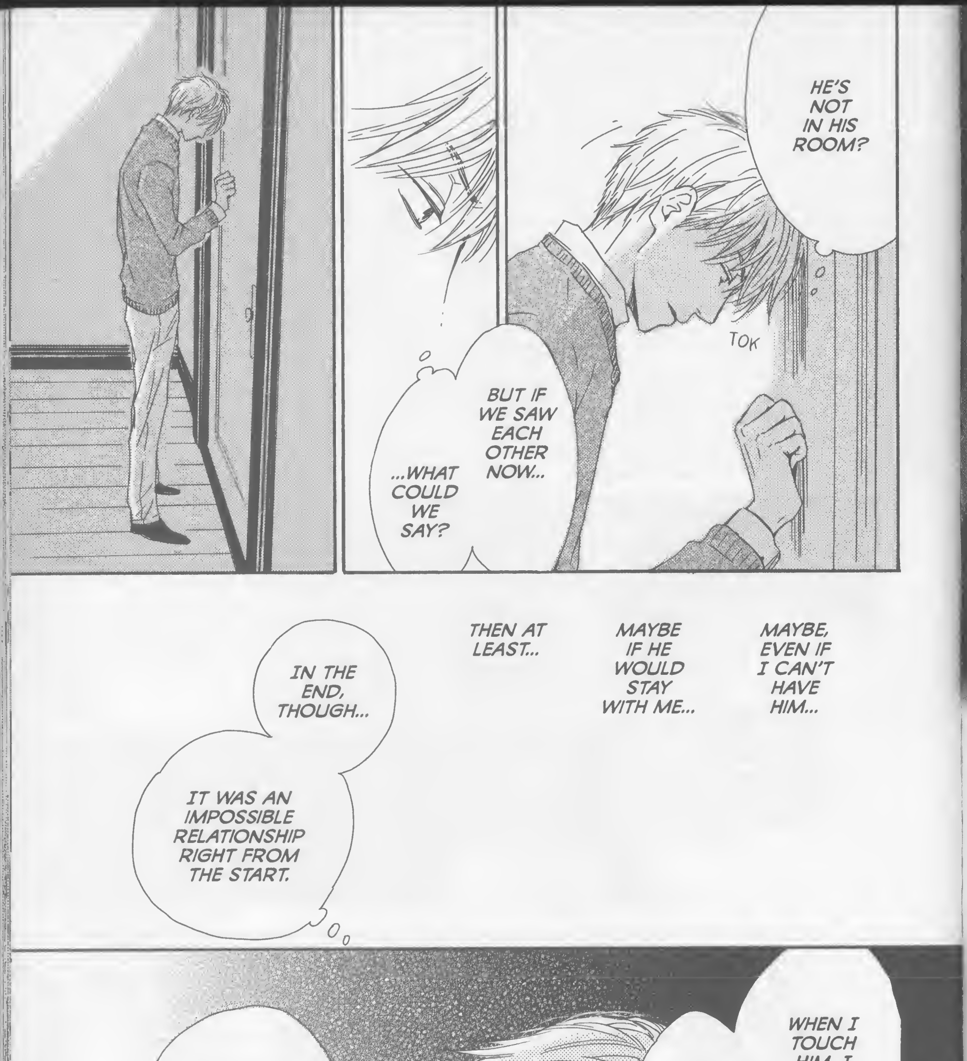

HONESTLY ...
HERE I AM, EVEN THOUGH I DECIDED I WASN'T GOING TO SAY A THING ABOUT YOU TWO.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
SIGH
KREAK
YOU TWO ARE A MASS OF CONTRADICTIONS.
THERE'S A DISCONNECT BETWEEN WHAT YOU SAY AND WHAT YOU DO.

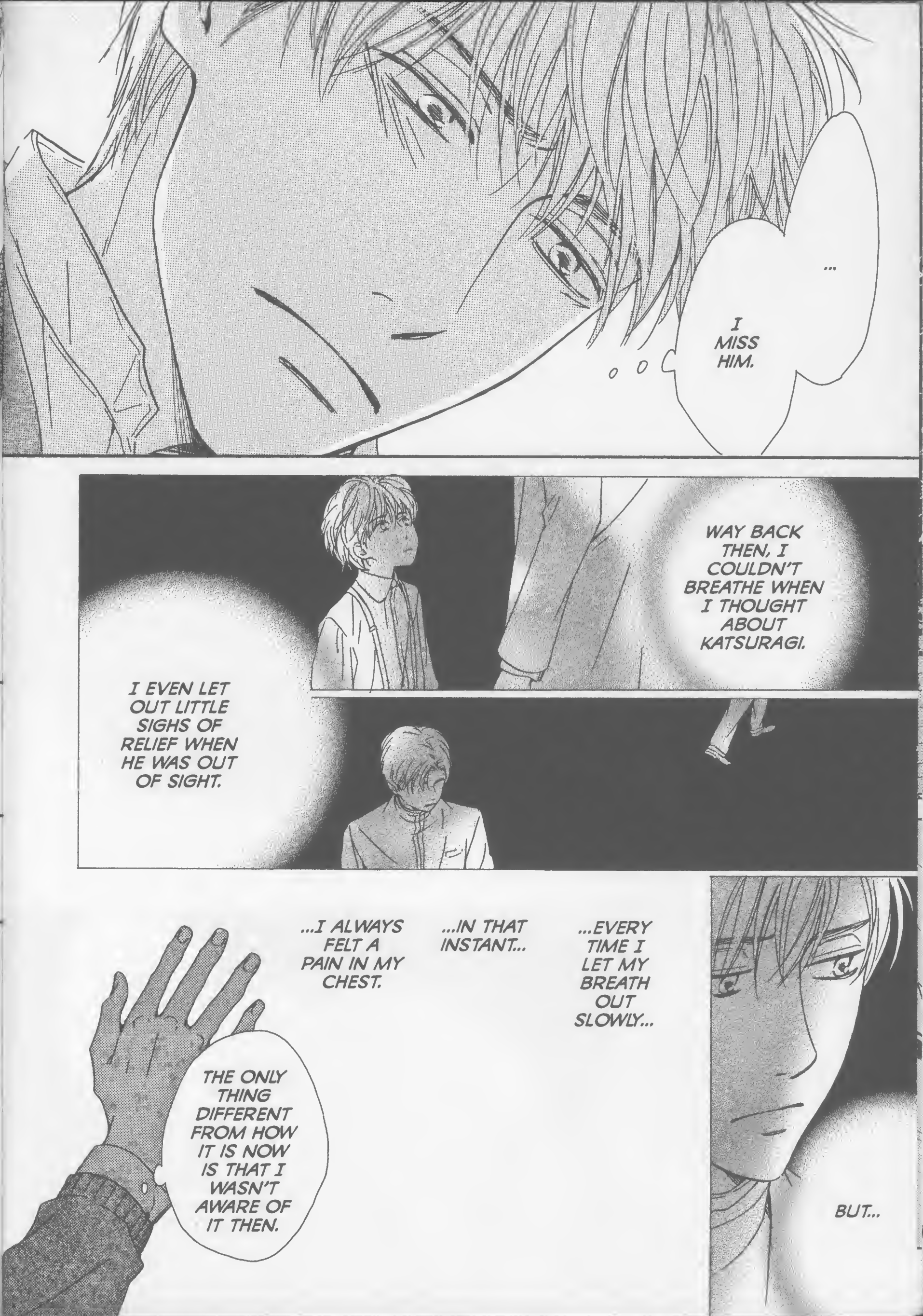

I'LL JUST SAY THIS...
I'M AGAINST YOUR RELATIONSHIP.
SHK
KUZE'S THE MASTER OF HIS HOUSE. EITHER WAY, HE'S GOING TO NEED AN HEIR.
I'M IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT WITH YOU ON THAT ONE.
...
MASTER AKIHITO UNDERSTANDS VERY WELL THAT HE MUST MAKE "FAMILY" HIS UTMOST PRIORITY.
THE PRINCES AND NOBLES THAT WERE FORMALLY FEUDAL LORDS DO NOT RECEIVE STIPENDS OF ANY KIND FROM THE GOVERNMENT, SIMILAR TO HOW THE NEW NOBILITY AND THE COURT NOBLES DON'T.
IF ONE IS CARELESS, ONE'S HOUSE MAY QUICKLY FALL.
MAINTAINING ONE'S HOUSE...

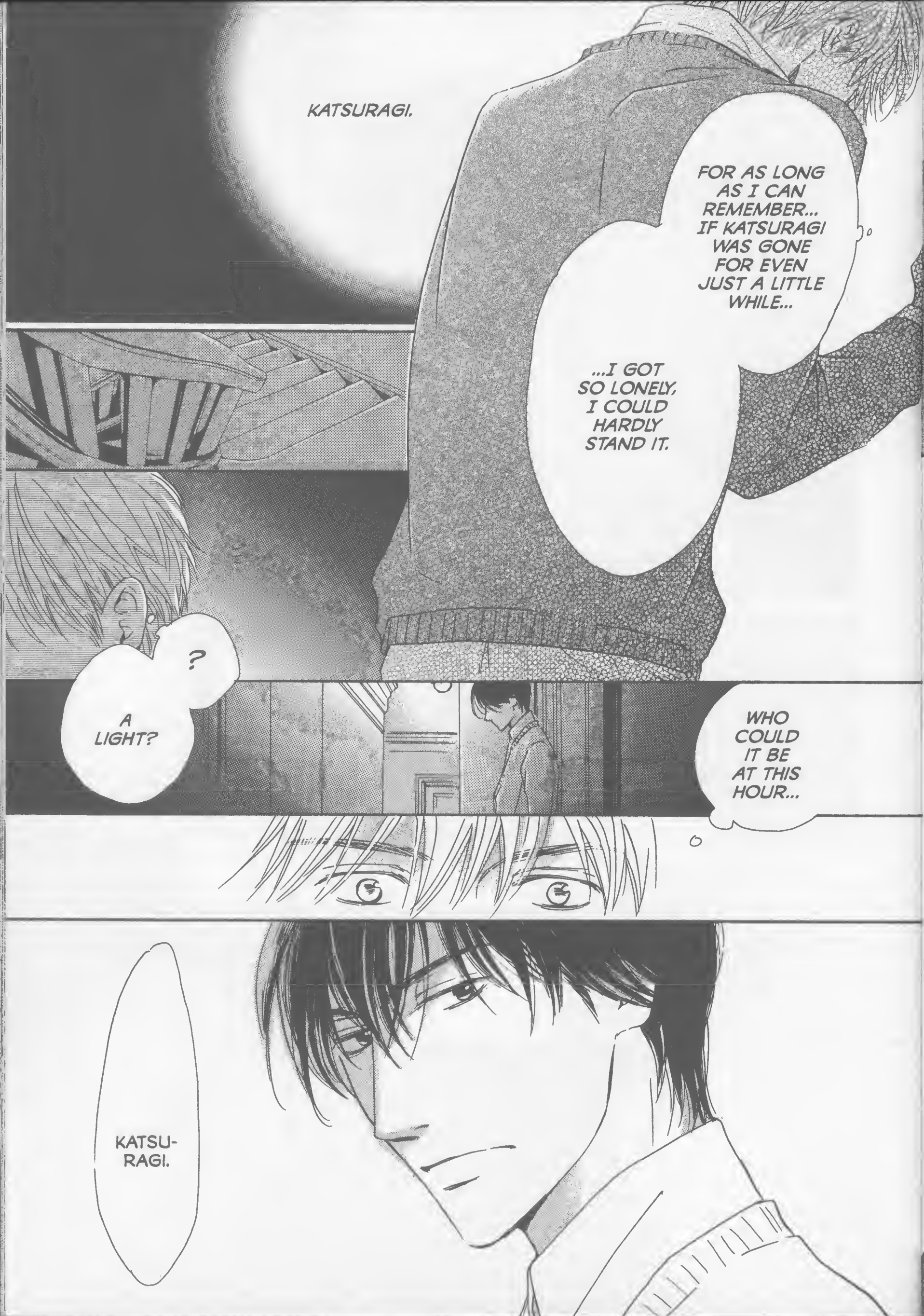

...ESSENTIALLY MEANS MAINTAINING THE OLD DOMAIN AND ALL THOSE CONNECTED WITH THE FAMILY NAME, INCLUDING FORMER RETAINERS.
THE PROMOTION OF THE KUZE HOUSE IS NO LONGER THE PROBLEM OF MASTER AKIHITO ALONE.
...
I REMEMBER...
...KUZE SAYING HE RESPECTED YOU.
SAYING HE WANTED TO BE LIKE YOU.
YOU'RE TOO SERIOUS FOR ME, THOUGH.
TOO SEVERE.
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO BE AROUND YOU FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR.
...
YOU ONCE SAID TO ME...

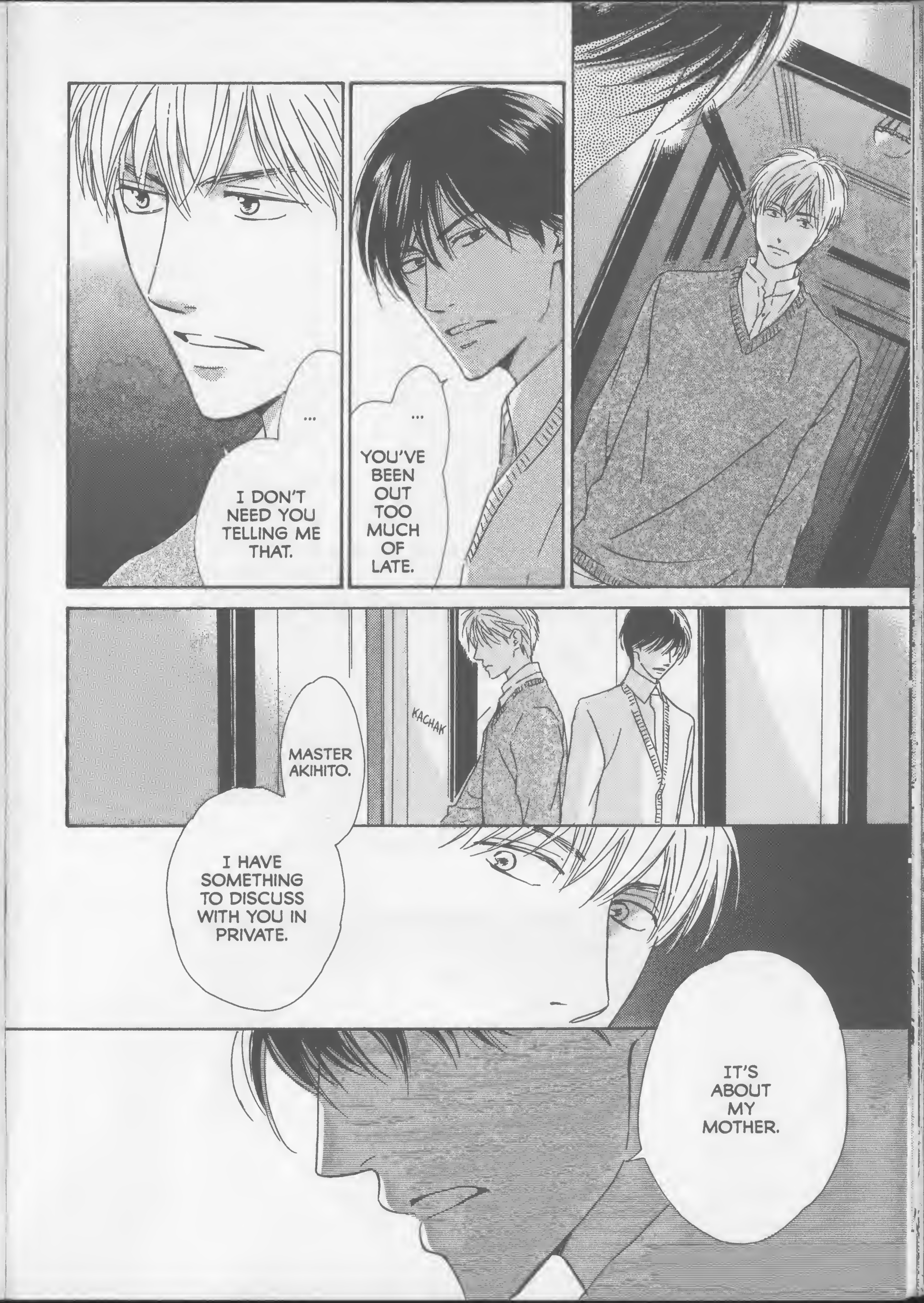

...THAT IT WAS *MY* PROBLEM.
THAT IF I DIDN'T CHANGE, MASTER AKIHITO WOULD NOT CHANGE EITHER.
YOU WERE EXACTLY RIGHT.
THIS SITUATION IS ENTIRELY MY RESPONSIBILITY.
KATSURAGI, YOU—
MASTER SOICHIRO.
I'D APPRECIATE YOUR HELP WITH SOMETHING.

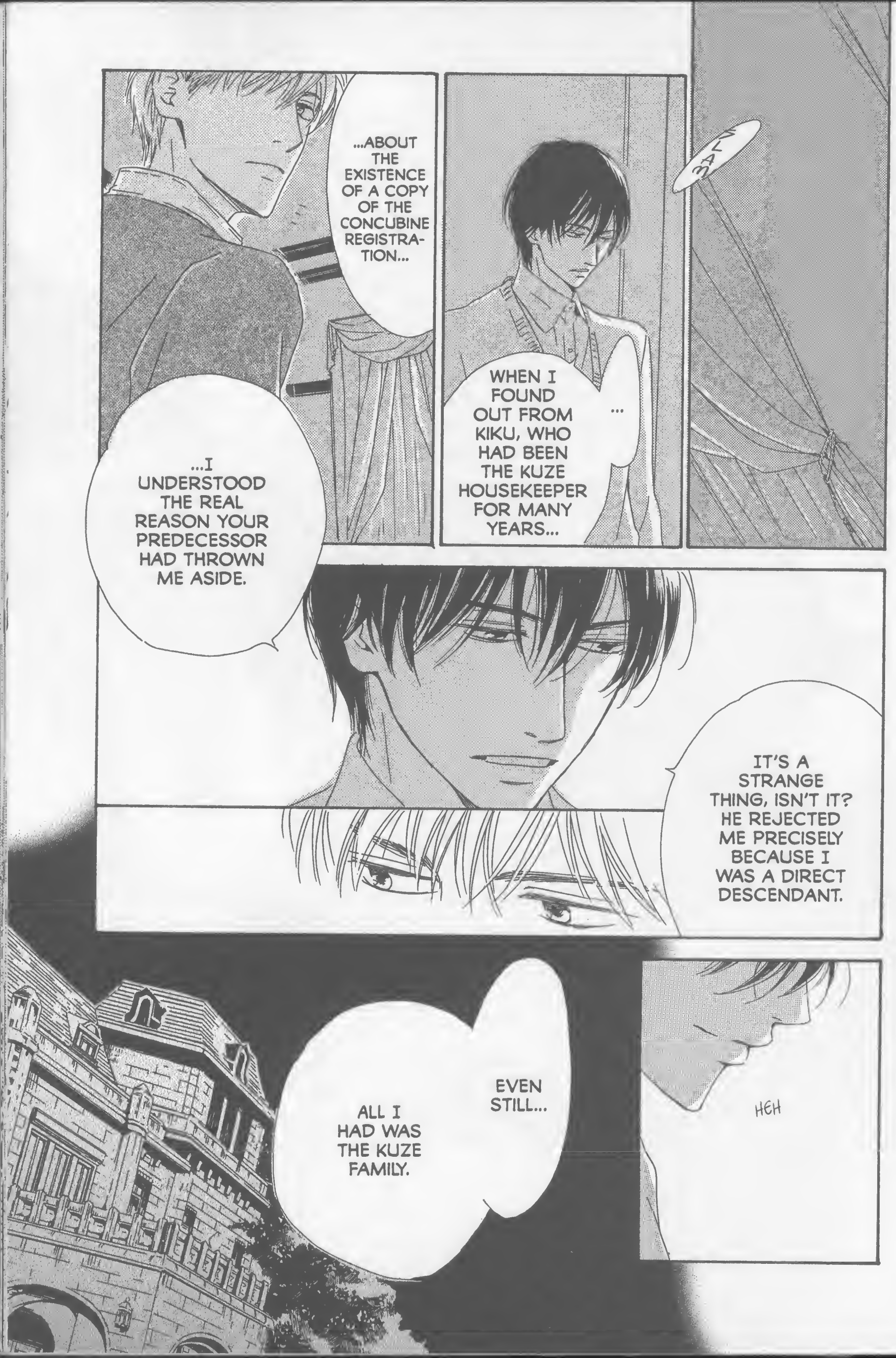

KREE
NOK
SHF

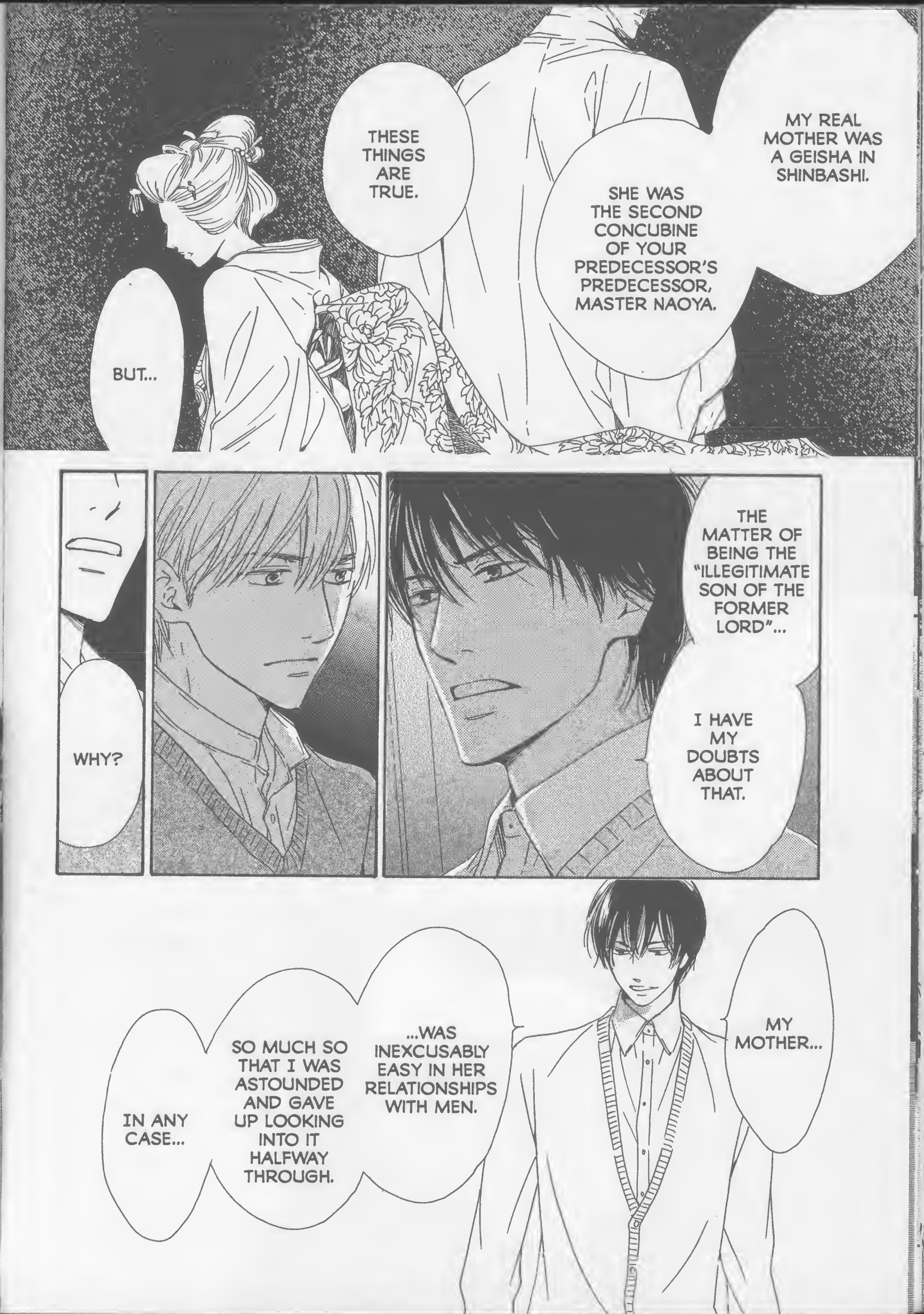

HE'S NOT IN HIS ROOM?
TOK
BUT IF WE SAW EACH OTHER NOW...
...WHAT COULD WE SAY?
MAYBE, EVEN IF I CAN'T HAVE HIM...
MAYBE IF HE WOULD STAY WITH ME...
THEN AT LEAST...
IN THE END, THOUGH...
IT WAS AN IMPOSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP RIGHT FROM THE START.
WHEN I TOUCH HIM, I WANT HIM.
EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM.
I DELUDED MYSELF INTO THINKING THAT EACH TIME WE WERE TOGETHER, OUR FEELINGS GREW CLOSER...
...

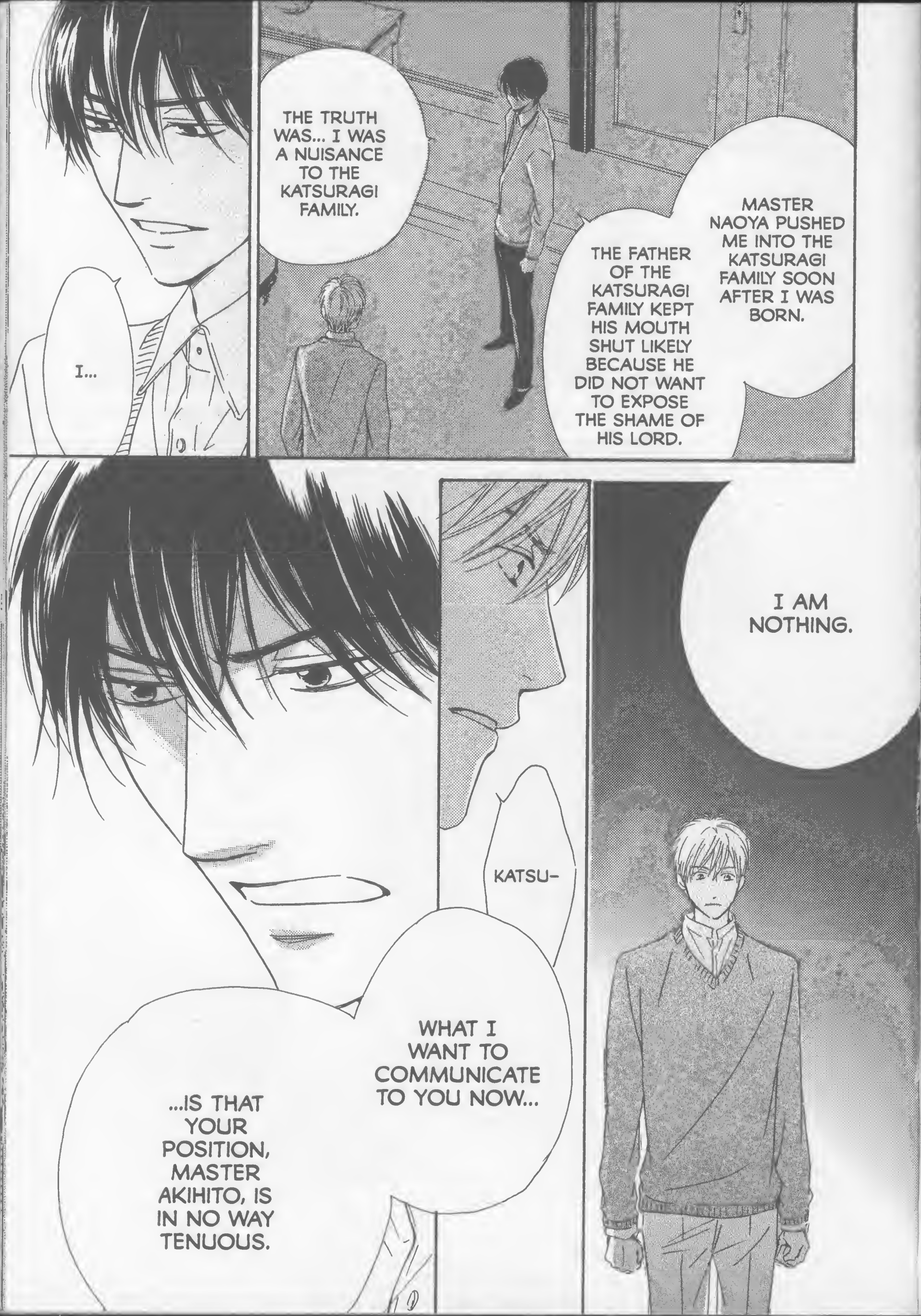

...
I MISS HIM.
WAY BACK THEN, I COULDN'T BREATHE WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT KATSURAGI.
I EVEN LET OUT LITTLE SIGHS OF RELIEF WHEN HE WAS OUT OF SIGHT.
BUT...
...EVERY TIME I LET MY BREATH OUT SLOWLY...
...IN THAT INSTANT...
...I ALWAYS FELT A PAIN IN MY CHEST.
THE ONLY THING DIFFERENT FROM HOW IT IS NOW IS THAT I WASN'T AWARE OF IT THEN.

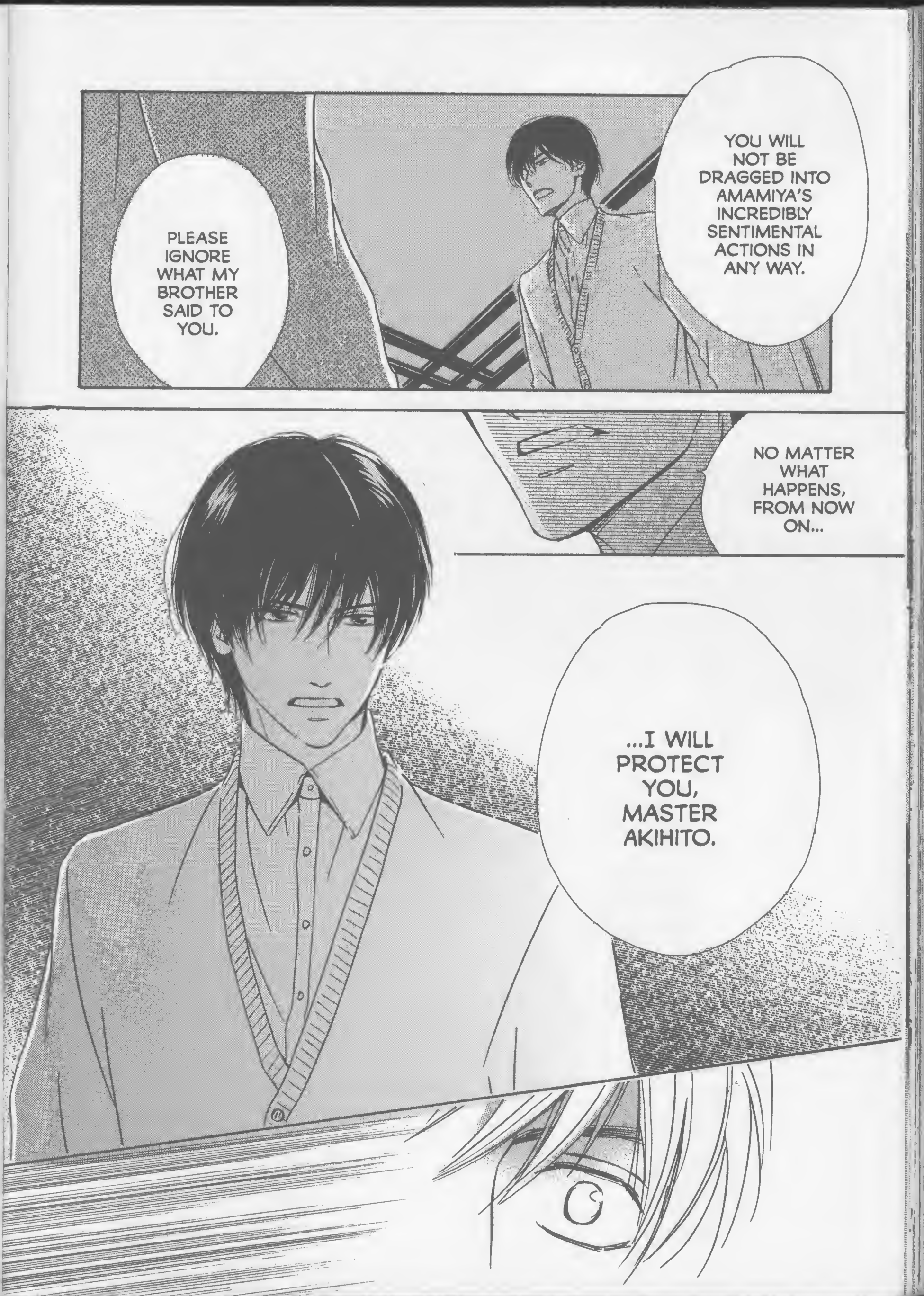

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER... IF KATSURAGI WAS GONE FOR EVEN JUST A LITTLE WHILE...
...I GOT SO LONELY, I COULD HARDLY STAND IT.
KATSURAGI.
?
A LIGHT?
WHO COULD IT BE AT THIS HOUR...
KATSURAGI.

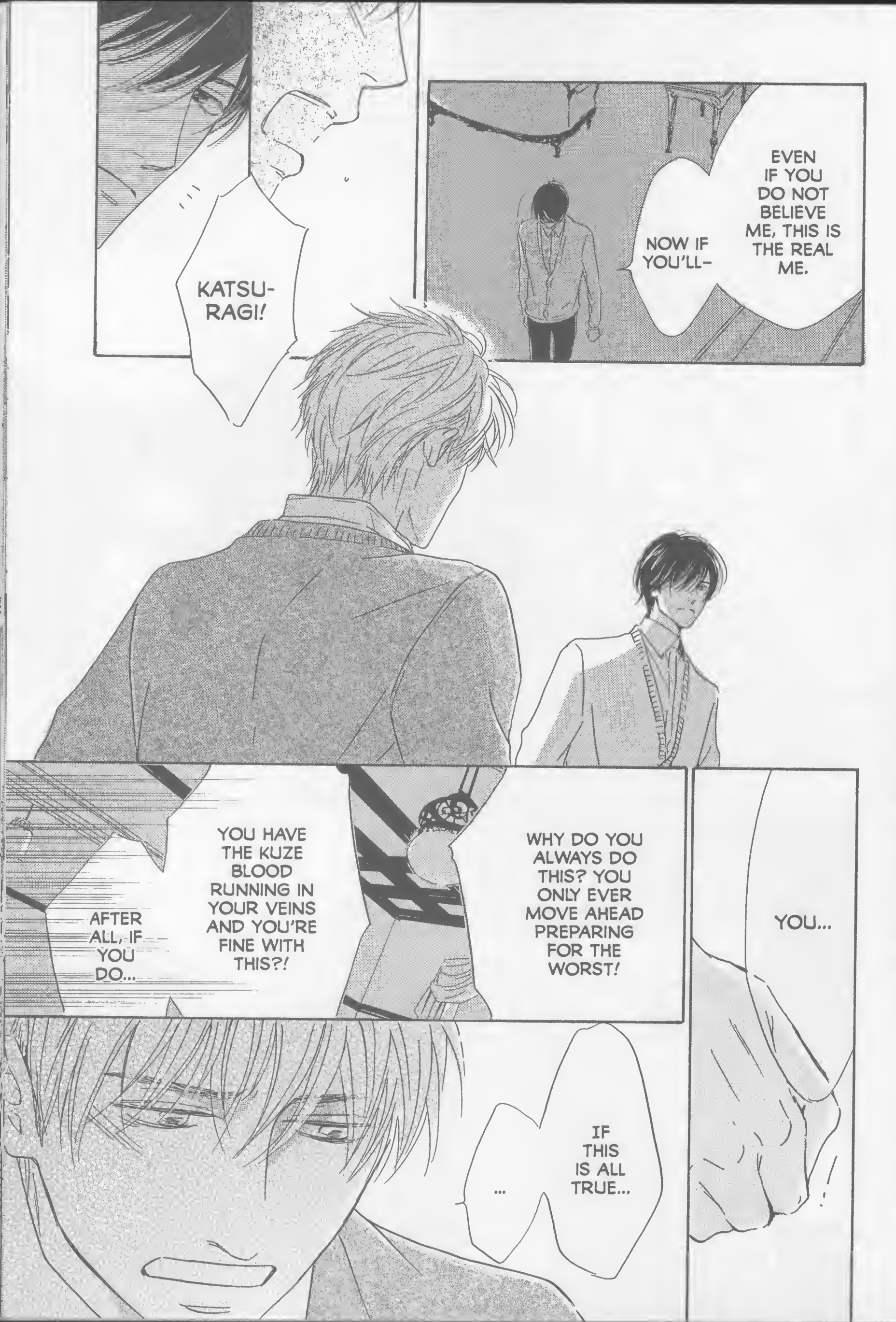

...
YOU'VE BEEN OUT TOO MUCH OF LATE.
...
I DON'T NEED YOU TELLING ME THAT.
KACHAK
MASTER AKIHITO.
I HAVE SOMETHING TO DISCUSS WITH YOU IN PRIVATE.
IT'S ABOUT MY MOTHER.

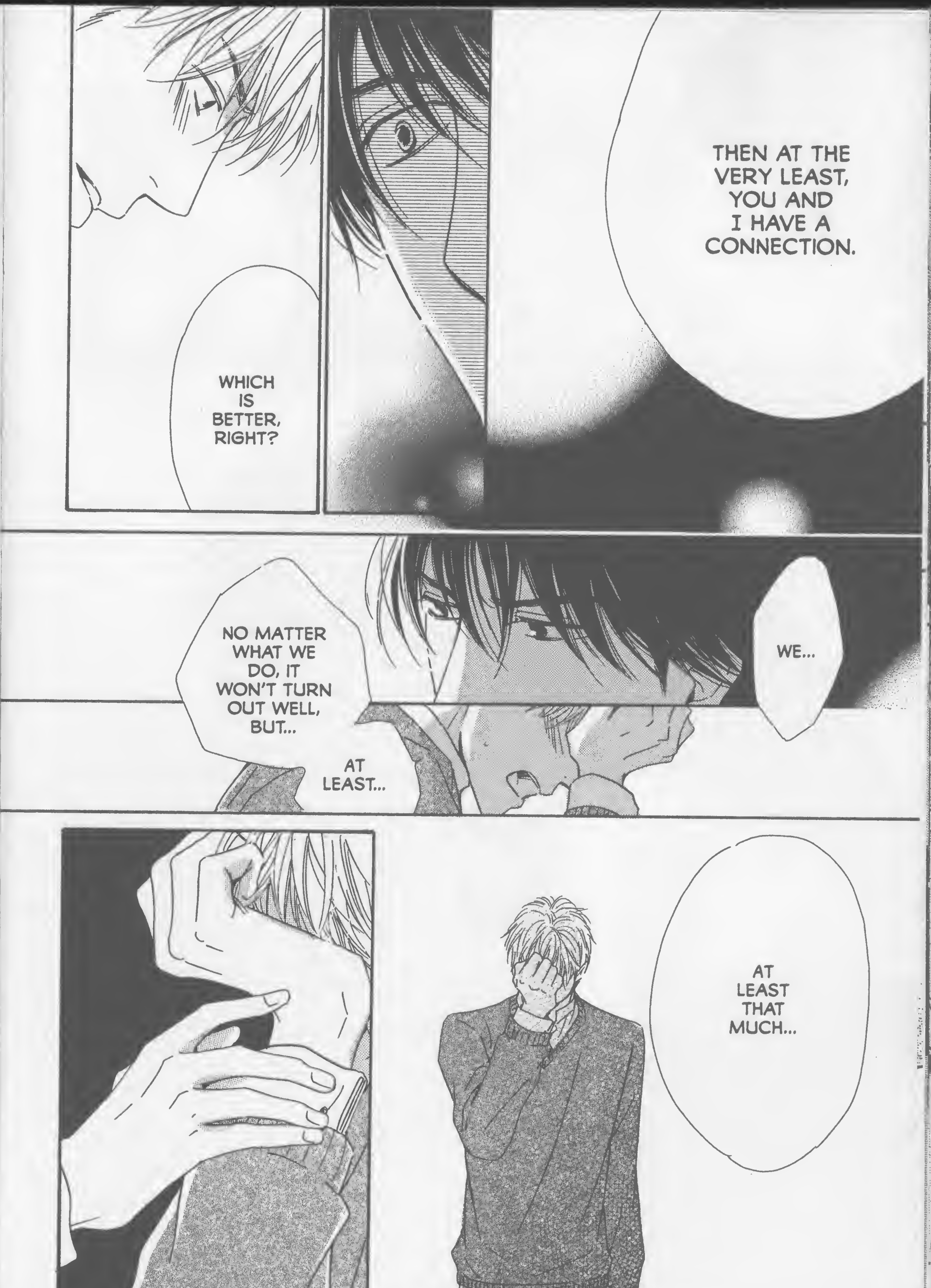

SLAM
...
WHEN I FOUND OUT FROM KIKU, WHO HAD BEEN THE KUZE HOUSEKEEPER FOR MANY YEARS...
...ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF A COPY OF THE CONCUBINE REGISTRATION...
...I UNDERSTOOD THE REAL REASON YOUR PREDECESSOR HAD THROWN ME ASIDE.
IT'S A STRANGE THING, ISN'T IT? HE REJECTED ME PRECISELY BECAUSE I WAS A DIRECT DESCENDANT.
HEH
EVEN STILL...
ALL I HAD WAS THE KUZE FAMILY.

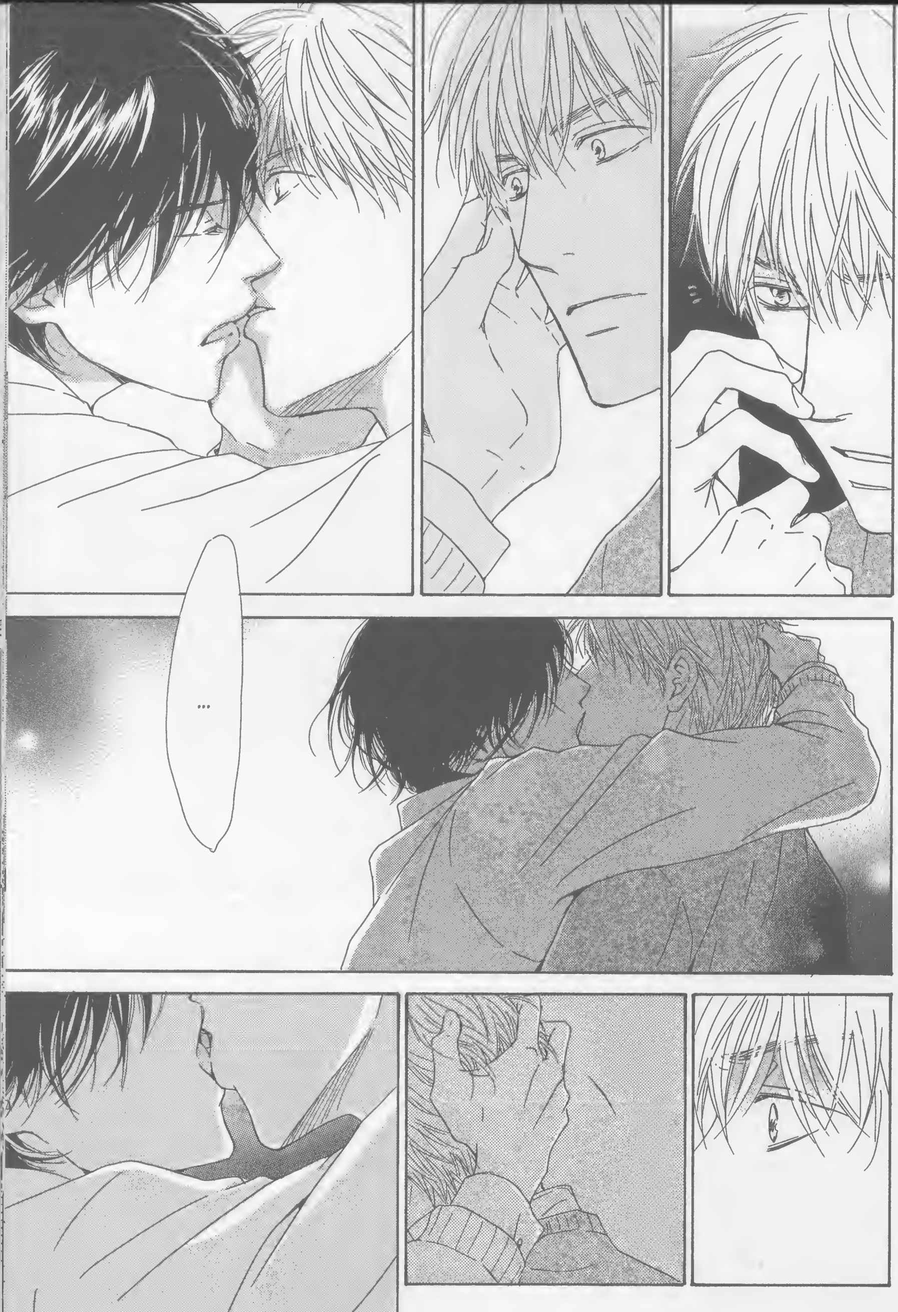

MY REAL MOTHER WAS A GEISHA IN SHINBASHI.
SHE WAS THE SECOND CONCUBINE OF YOUR PREDECESSOR'S PREDECESSOR, MASTER NAOYA.
THESE THINGS ARE TRUE.
BUT...
THE MATTER OF BEING THE "ILLEGITIMATE SON OF THE FORMER LORD"...
I HAVE MY DOUBTS ABOUT THAT.
WHY?
MY MOTHER...
...WAS INEXCUSABLY EASY IN HER RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN.
SO MUCH SO THAT I WAS ASTOUNDED AND GAVE UP LOOKING INTO IT HALFWAY THROUGH.
IN ANY CASE...


MASTER NAOYA PUSHED ME INTO THE KATSURAGI FAMILY SOON AFTER I WAS BORN.
THE FATHER OF THE KATSURAGI FAMILY KEPT HIS MOUTH SHUT LIKELY BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT TO EXPOSE THE SHAME OF HIS LORD.
THE TRUTH WAS... I WAS A NUISANCE TO THE KATSURAGI FAMILY.
I...
I AM NOTHING.
KATSU-
WHAT I WANT TO COMMUNICATE TO YOU NOW...
...IS THAT YOUR POSITION, MASTER AKIHITO, IS IN NO WAY TENUOUS.


YOU WILL NOT BE DRAGGED INTO AMAMIYA'S INCREDIBLY SENTIMENTAL ACTIONS IN ANY WAY.
PLEASE IGNORE WHAT MY BROTHER SAID TO YOU.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, FROM NOW ON...
...I WILL PROTECT YOU, MASTER AKIHITO.


EVEN IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE ME, THIS IS THE REAL ME.
NOW IF YOU'LL–
KATSU-RAGI!
YOU...
WHY DO YOU ALWAYS DO THIS? YOU ONLY EVER MOVE AHEAD PREPARING FOR THE WORST!
YOU HAVE THE KUZE BLOOD RUNNING IN YOUR VEINS AND YOU'RE FINE WITH THIS?!
AFTER ALL, IF YOU DO...
IF THIS IS ALL TRUE...
...


THEN AT THE VERY LEAST, YOU AND I HAVE A CONNECTION.
WHICH IS BETTER, RIGHT?
WE...
NO MATTER WHAT WE DO, IT WON'T TURN OUT WELL, BUT...
AT LEAST...
AT LEAST THAT MUCH...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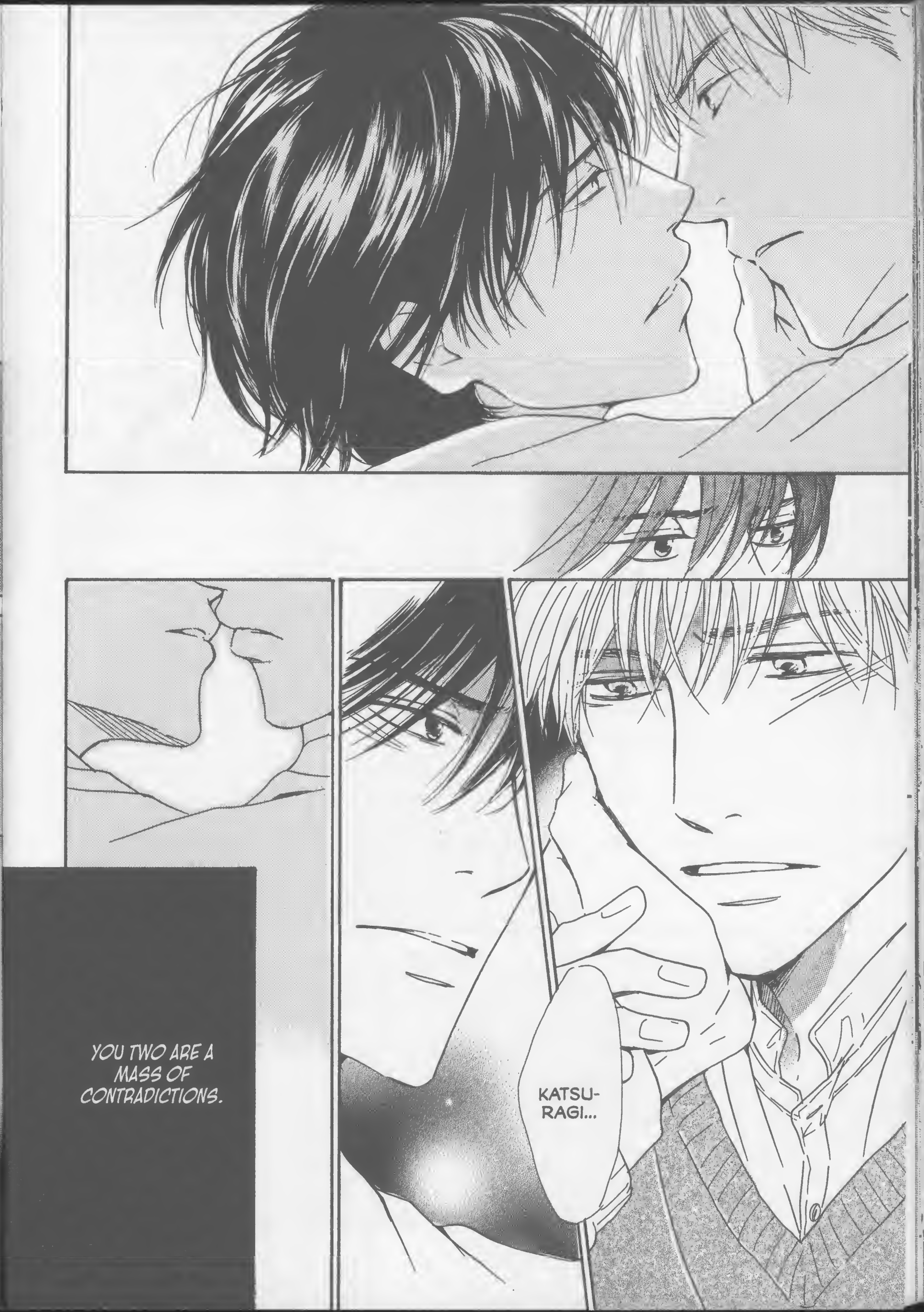
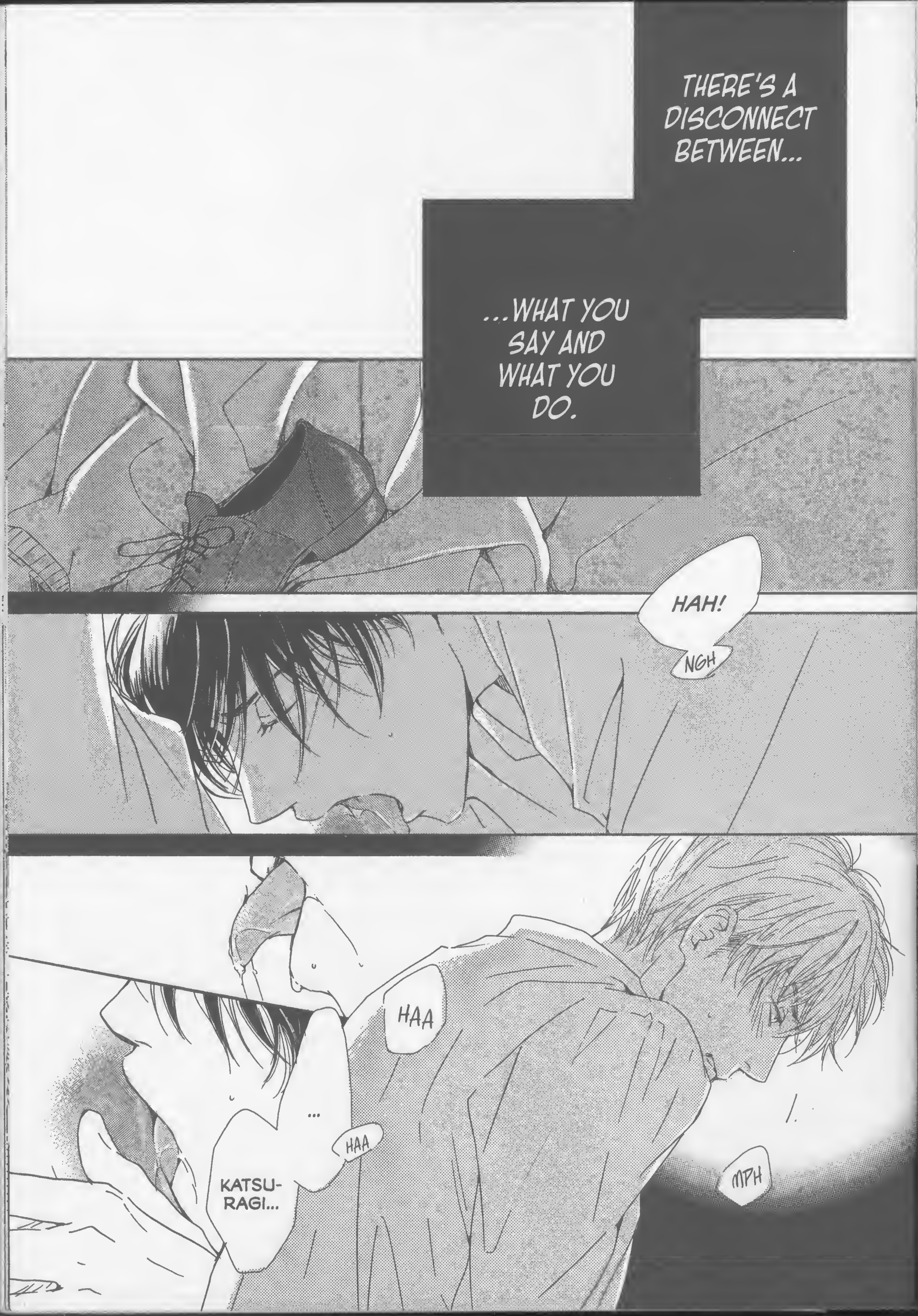
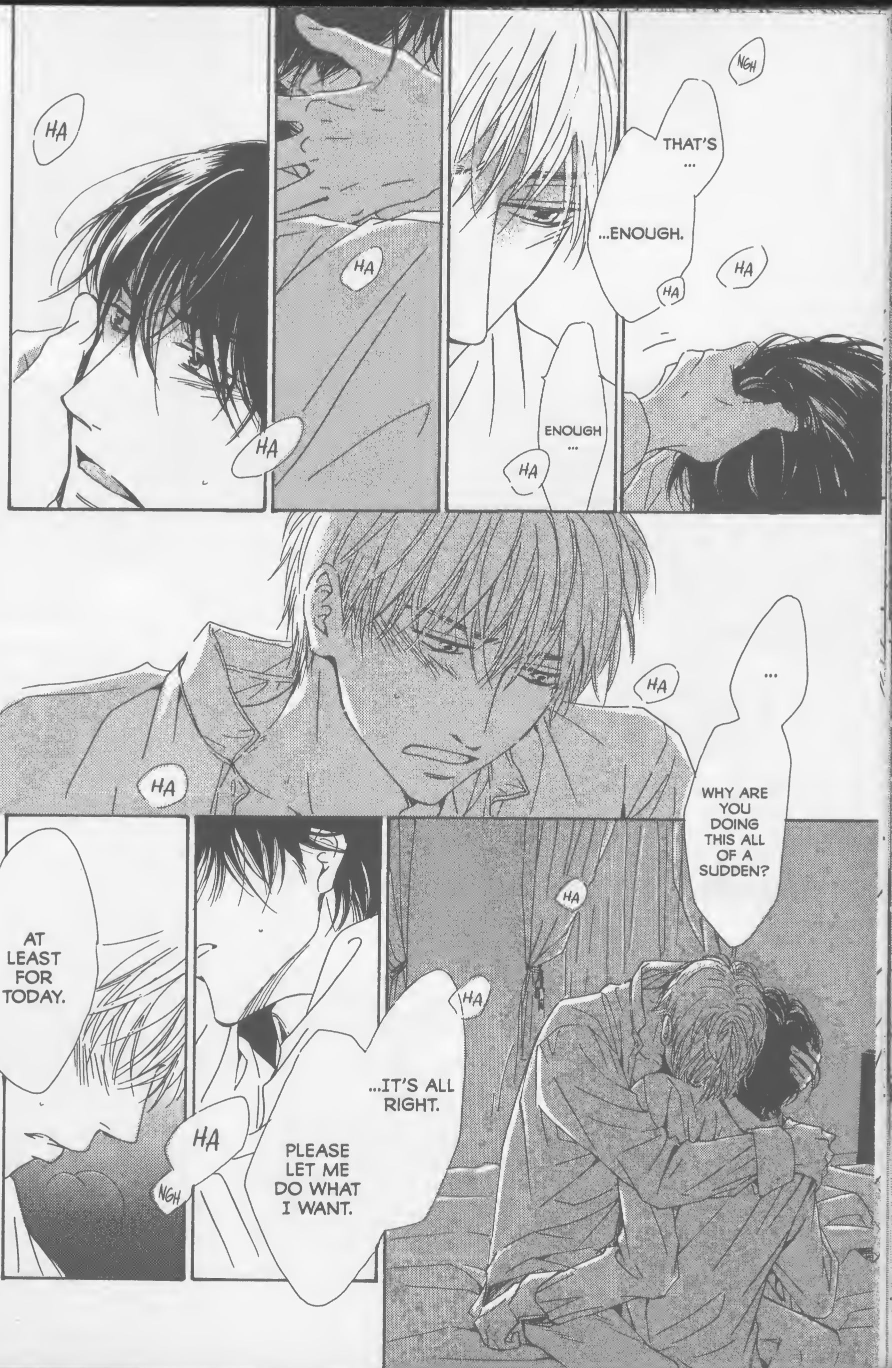
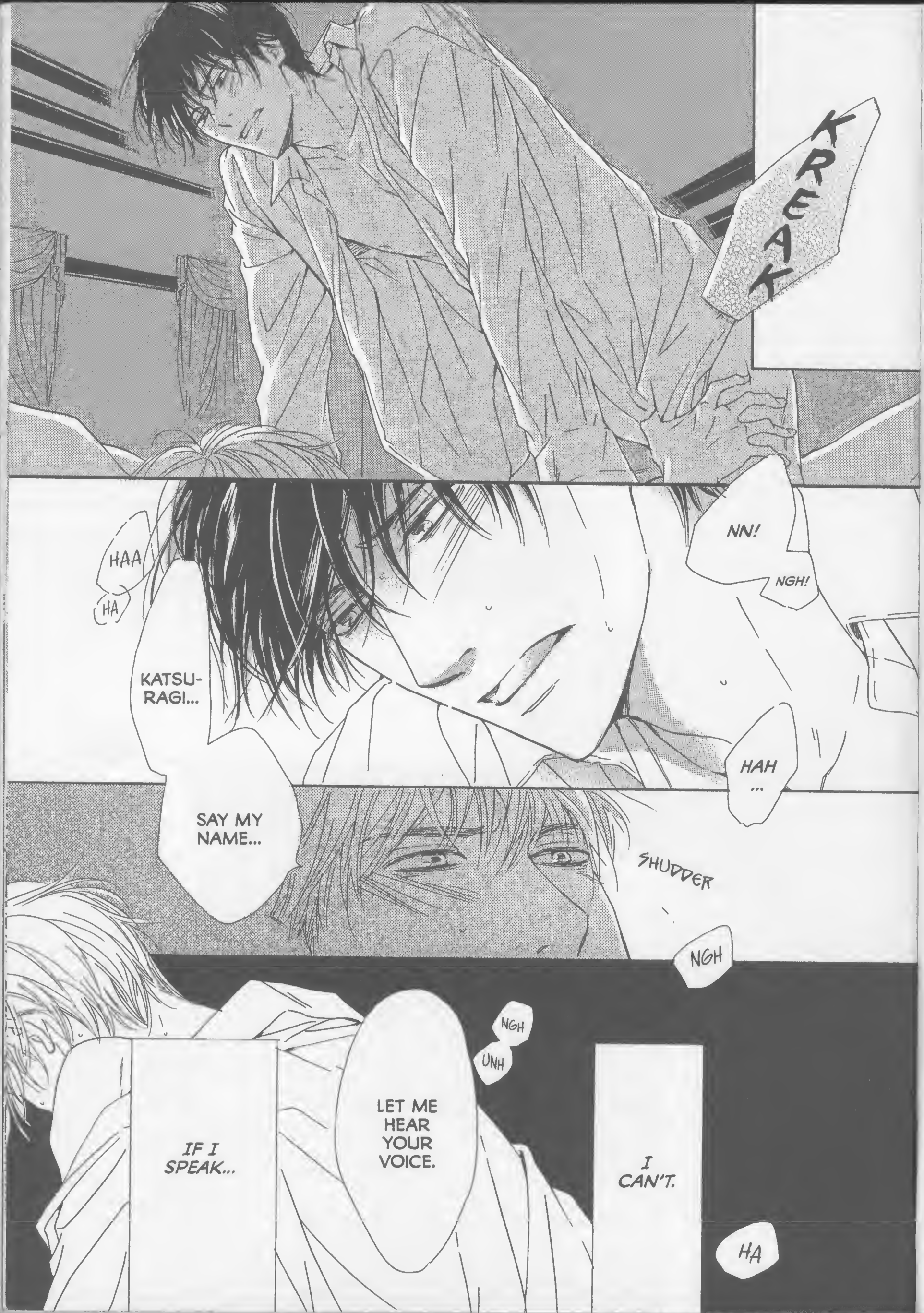
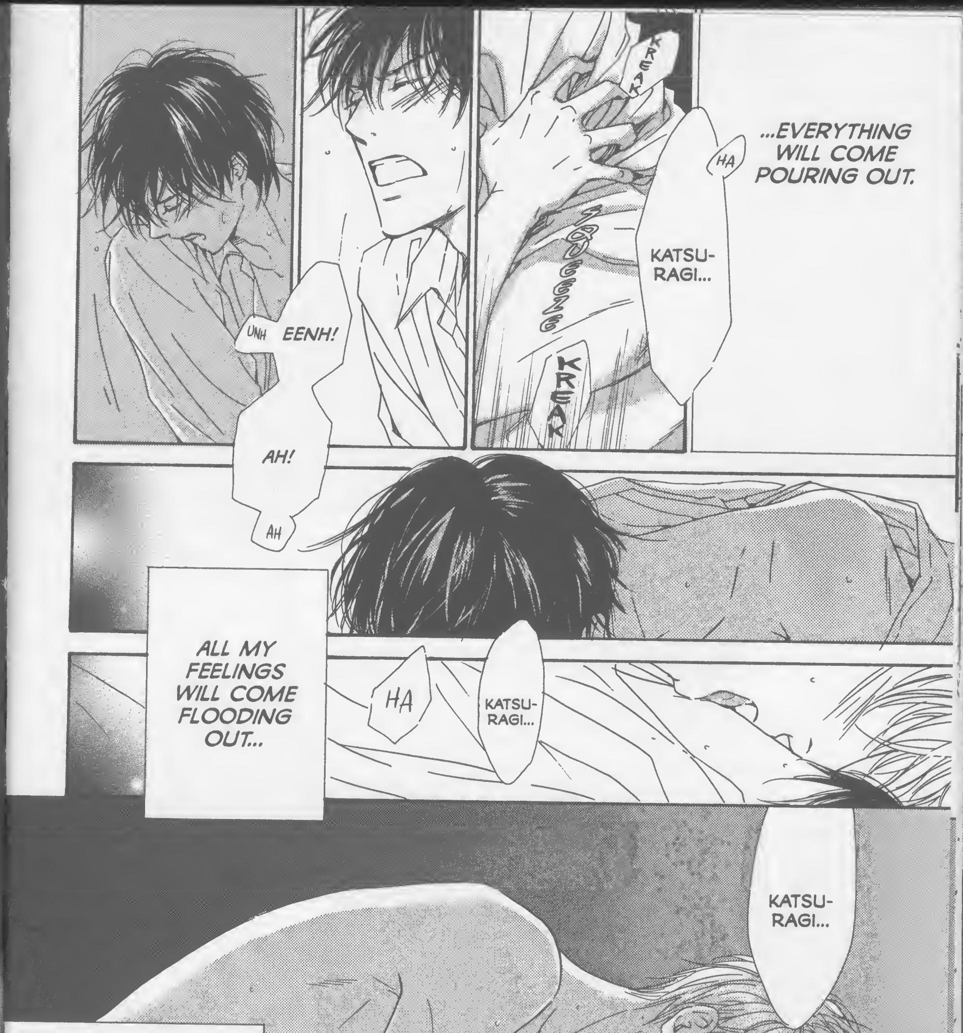
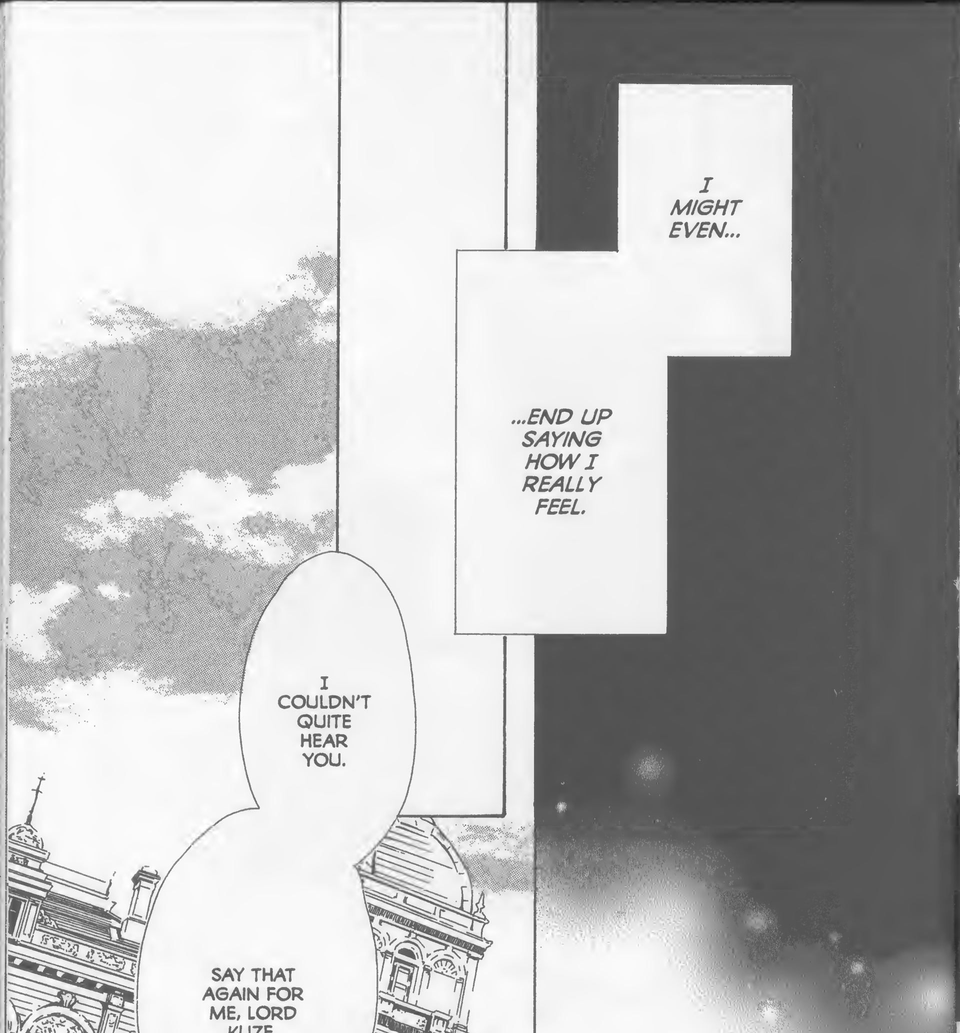

KATSURAGI...
YOU TWO ARE A MASS OF CONTRADICTIONS.

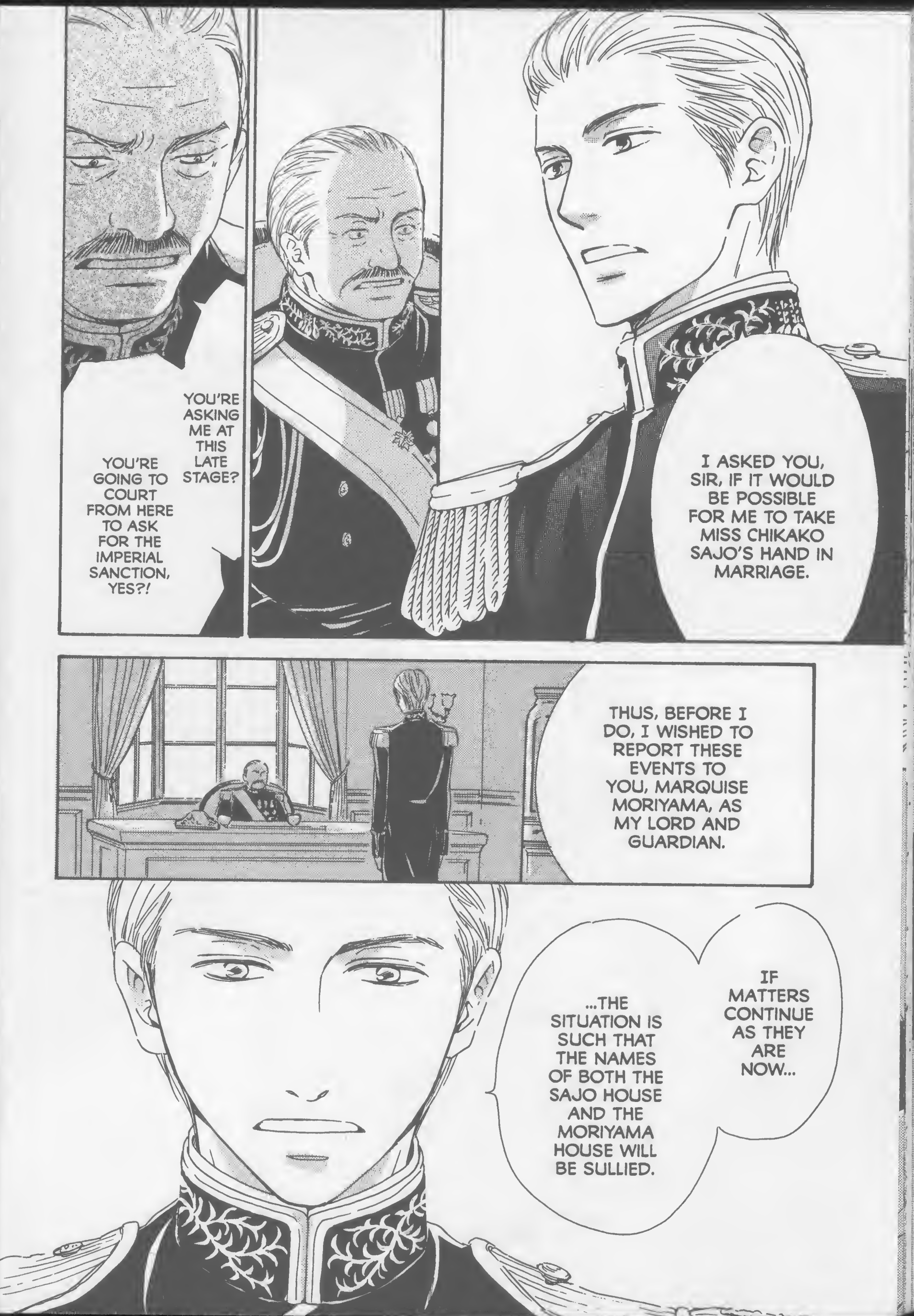

THERE'S A DISCONNECT BETWEEN...
...WHAT YOU SAY AND WHAT YOU DO.
HAH!
NGH
MPH
HAA
...
HAA
KATSURAGI...

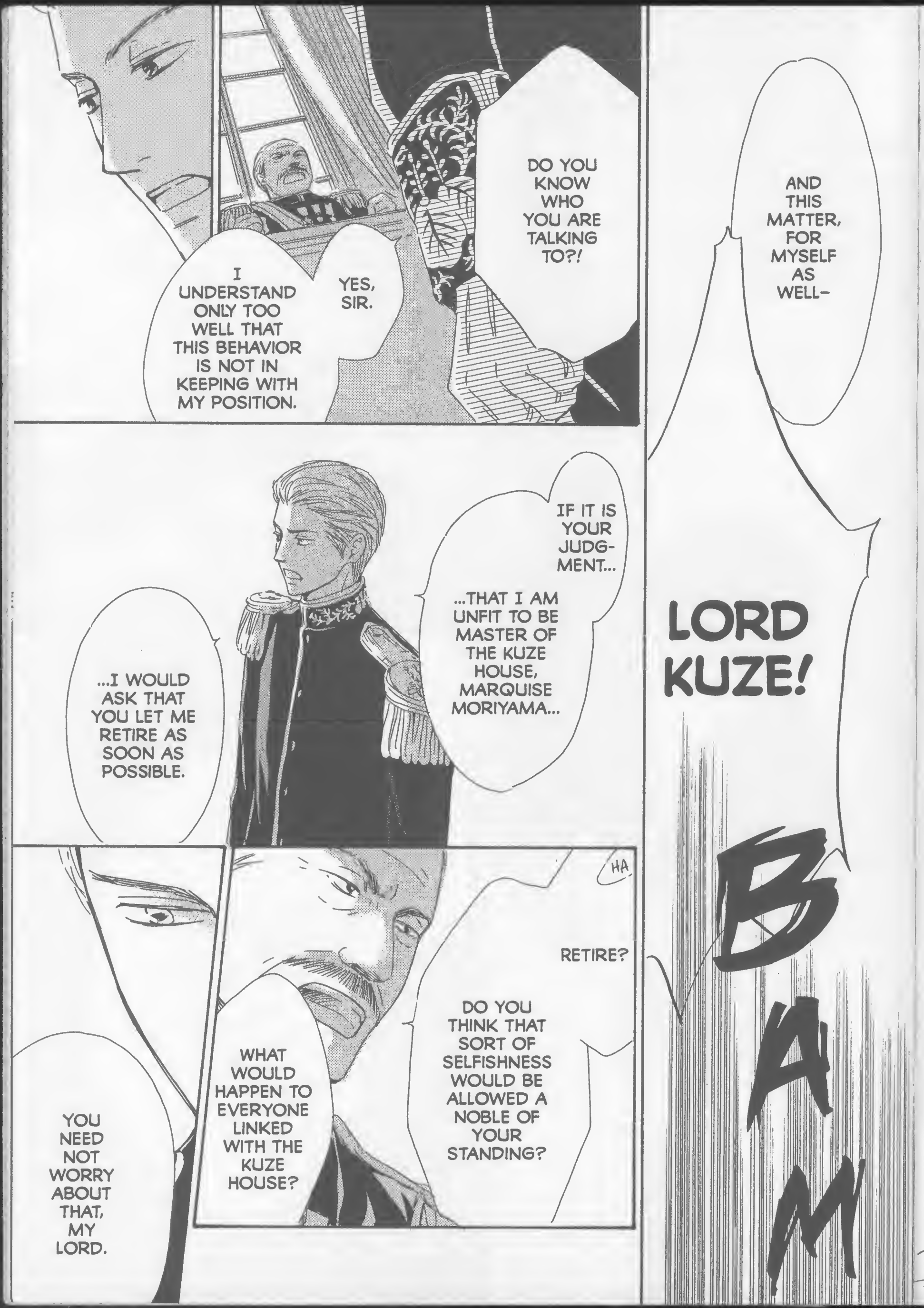

NGH
THAT'S ...
...ENOUGH.
HA
HA
ENOUGH ...
HA
HA
HA
HA
...
HA
HA
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS ALL OF A SUDDEN?
HA
HA
...IT'S ALL RIGHT.
PLEASE LET ME DO WHAT I WANT.
HA
NGH
AT LEAST FOR TODAY.

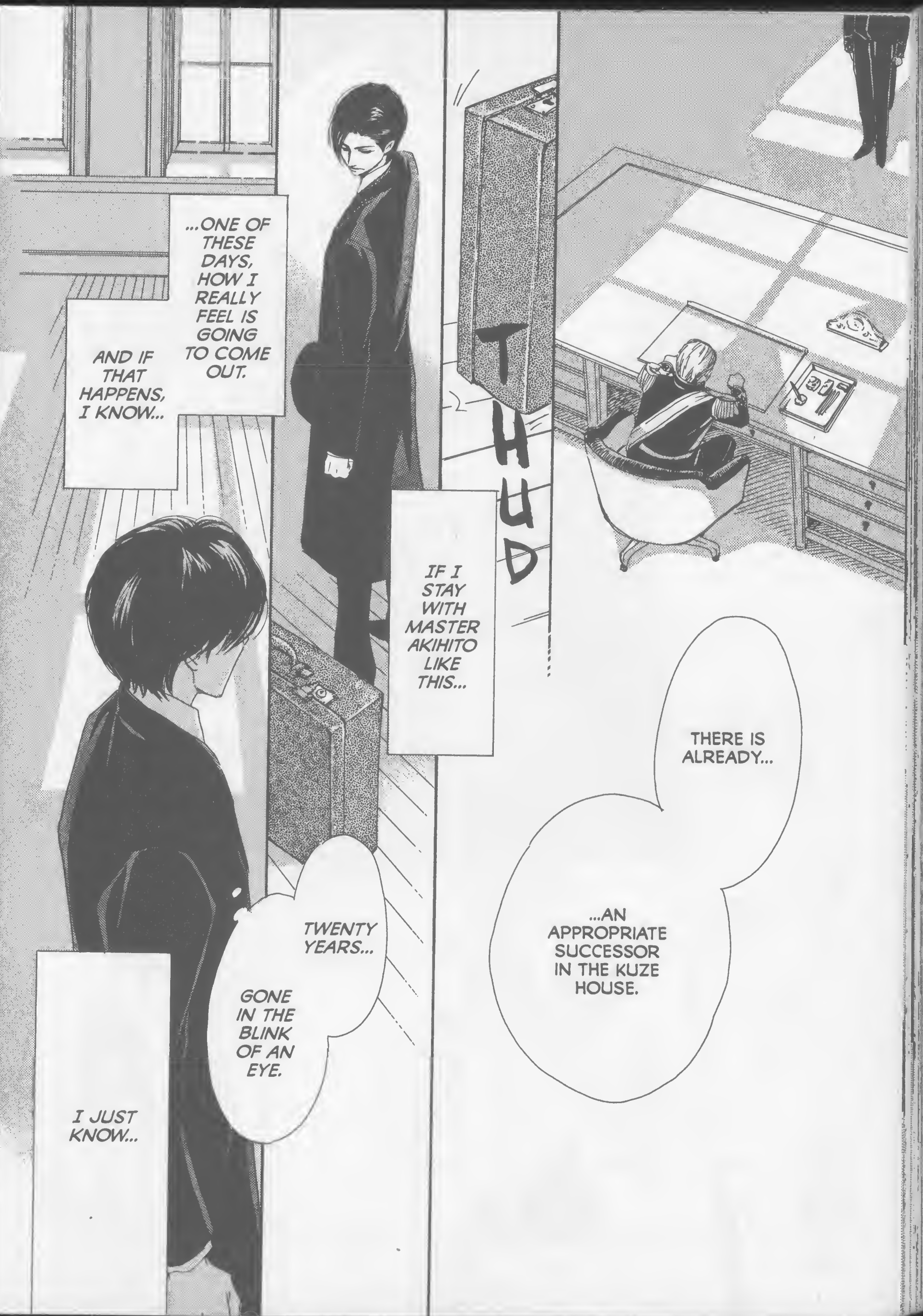

KREAK
NN!
NGH!
HAH ...
KATSURAGI...
HAA
HA
SAY MY NAME...
SHUDDER
NGH
I CAN'T.
NGH
UNH
LET ME HEAR YOUR VOICE.
IF I SPEAK...
HA

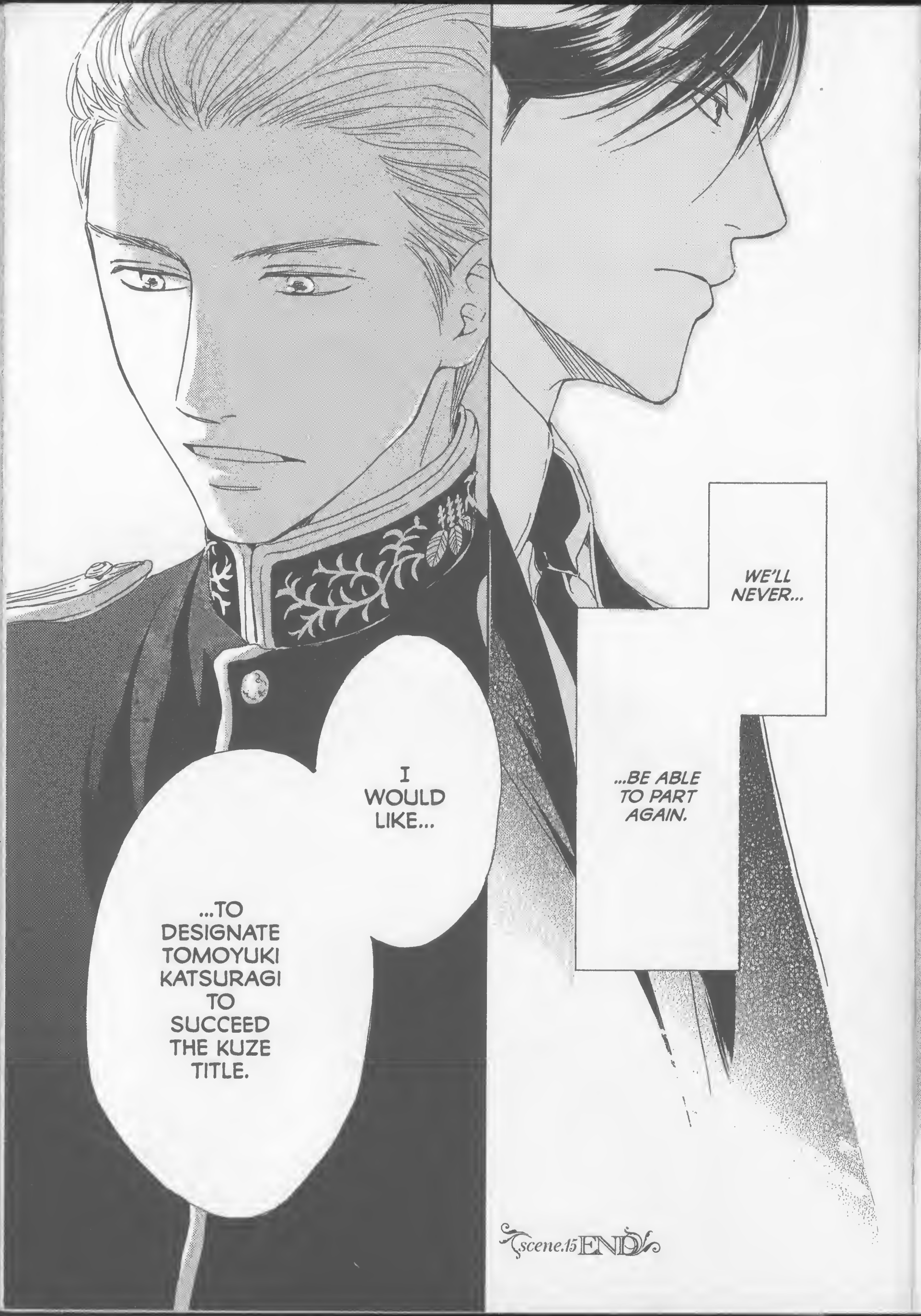

KREAK
...EVERYTHING WILL COME POURING OUT.
HA
KATSU-RAGI...
SQUEEZE
KREAK
UNH
EENH!
AH!
AH
ALL MY FEELINGS WILL COME FLOODING OUT...
HA
KATSU-RAGI...
KATSU-RAGI...
I JUST KNOW IT.


I MIGHT EVEN...
...END UP SAYING HOW I REALLY FEEL.
I COULDN'T QUITE HEAR YOU.
SAY THAT AGAIN FOR ME, LORD KUZE.


I ASKED YOU, SIR, IF IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR ME TO TAKE MISS CHIKAKO SAJO'S HAND IN MARRIAGE.
YOU'RE ASKING ME AT THIS LATE STAGE?
YOU'RE GOING TO COURT FROM HERE TO ASK FOR THE IMPERIAL SANCTION, YES?!
THUS, BEFORE I DO, I WISHED TO REPORT THESE EVENTS TO YOU, MARQUISE MORIYAMA, AS MY LORD AND GUARDIAN.
IF MATTERS CONTINUE AS THEY ARE NOW...
...THE SITUATION IS SUCH THAT THE NAMES OF BOTH THE SAJO HOUSE AND THE MORIYAMA HOUSE WILL BE SULLIED.


AND THIS MATTER, FOR MYSELF AS WELL-
LORD KUZE!
BAM
DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE TALKING TO?!
YES, SIR.
I UNDERSTAND ONLY TOO WELL THAT THIS BEHAVIOR IS NOT IN KEEPING WITH MY POSITION.
IF IT IS YOUR JUDGMENT...
...THAT I AM UNFIT TO BE MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE, MARQUISE MORIYAMA...
...I WOULD ASK THAT YOU LET ME RETIRE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
HA
RETIRE?
DO YOU THINK THAT SORT OF SELFISHNESS WOULD BE ALLOWED A NOBLE OF YOUR STANDING?
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO EVERYONE LINKED WITH THE KUZE HOUSE?
YOU NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT THAT, MY LORD.


THERE IS ALREADY...
...AN APPROPRIATE SUCCESSOR IN THE KUZE HOUSE.
THUD
IF I STAY WITH MASTER AKIHITO LIKE THIS...
...ONE OF THESE DAYS, HOW I REALLY FEEL IS GOING TO COME OUT.
AND IF THAT HAPPENS, I KNOW...
TWENTY YEARS...
GONE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.
I JUST KNOW...


WE'LL NEVER...
...BE ABLE TO PART AGAIN.
I WOULD LIKE...
...TO DESIGNATE TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI TO SUCCEED THE KUZE TITLE.
scene.15 END

THIS IS THE THIRD VOLUME. WE MADE IT THIS FAR, AND THERE'S STILL MORE TO COME. I'D BE DELIGHTED IF YOU COULD COME ALONG WITH ME JUST A LITTLE FURTHER. I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN IN THE NEXT VOLUME!

SHOKO HIDAKA MAY 2011

I MADE TROUBLE FOR MY EDITOR AGAIN THIS TIME... THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS HELPING ME OUT...

> "Speeding along with one book a year. Somehow, we've made it to Volume 3. Thanks for your support. By the time this book is out, I'll be done moving. Or I should be!"

About the Author

Shoko Hidaka's works have been published in English, French and German. Her previously published English-language releases include *Restart* and *Not Enough Time*. Born on March 31st in Tokyo, she's an Aries with blood type A.